

Churchtown Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104861
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	287049
Inspection date	8 June 2007
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 category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	882
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr G Cottrell
Headteacher	Mr David Walker
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2002
School address	St Cuthbert's Road Churchtown Southport Merseyside PR9 7NN
Telephone number	01704 508500
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is one of the largest primary schools in the country. It is in a socially advantaged area but draws some of its pupils from wider social circumstances. Nearly all pupils are White British and none are at the early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average but the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Pupils enter the Reception year both from the school's own Nursery class and from numerous other nursery providers. The school has several awards including a National Healthy Schools Award, Basic Skills Quality Mark, ActiveMark Gold, ArtsMark Silver and lifetime achievement award Ecoflag.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This school is outstanding in all aspects of its work. At its heart lies a commitment to enabling every one of its many pupils to achieve as well as they can whatever their gifts, talents or learning difficulties. It succeeds very well in this. As a result, pupils' achievement is outstanding both academically and in terms of their personal and social development.

Churchtown is a very big school with the family atmosphere of a small one. Pupils take great enjoyment in their education because of the excellent care, guidance and support they receive and because outstanding teaching ensures that the work they are given motivates and challenges them to learn. As a result they achieve well above average standards overall in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, with standards in English being particularly high. However, that is only part of the story. Pupils achieve very well beyond these core subjects, for example in art and design. They receive a very good all-round education because the school provides an outstanding curriculum that helps them develop a wide range of skills and interests. This curriculum is enriched by a very good range of out of school activities and by visits and visitors that add that extra bit of spice to learning.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. Pupils in turn respond very well - their behaviour is exemplary and they are growing into mature, confident and caring young people. Their high quality social skills start to be developed in the very stimulating Foundation Stage and this process carries on throughout the school. Pupils are very well prepared for adult life and show a very good level of consideration for others, both in school and beyond. Excellent systems to track pupils' progress mean that teachers are ready to intervene with tailored programmes of work when necessary. The school's very successful commitment to pupils with learning difficulties shows in the outstanding progress these pupils make, matching that made by other groups. This process is aided greatly by highly effective teaching assistants. Outstanding partnerships with other schools and organisations, for example the Janus Learning Community Network, help drive innovation, and include international links, and intervention programmes such as Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) and emotional intelligence.

The 'engine room' of the school is its outstanding leadership and management. The headteacher is tireless in seeking ways to improve the quality of education pupils receive. Leading by example, he inspires and enthuses staff and, with the assistance of a very able governing body, has designed a management structure that allows the school's family atmosphere to permeate day-to-day life whilst also giving other school leaders the chance to make their own very effective contributions to pupils' academic and personal development. School leaders and governors continually seek the best for their pupils and are continually looking for ways to improve the already high quality of education they provide. This school knows itself very well and there is no hint of complacency in its work, ensuring that it has excellent capacity to succeed further.

What the school should do to improve further

- This outstanding school knows itself very well and is already taking the steps it has identified to make it even better. As a result, no issues for improvement are raised.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children start the Nursery class with standards that are a little above those expected for their age but at the start of the Reception year the influx of a large number of children from other nursery providers results in overall standards becoming broadly average. Children flourish in the Foundation Stage because they receive very well focused learning activities within very stimulating surroundings. It is in here they receive the thorough grounding in social skills that impacts so strongly as they move up the school. Progress is smooth and very good throughout the school because teachers have consistently high expectations of what each pupil should achieve. As a result, achievement is outstanding for all groups of pupils. Standards are well above average overall by the end of Year 6 and in English they are close to exceptionally high due to the very good range of opportunities pupils get to develop their writing skills. Writing is also a strength in Key Stage 1. Between 2003 and 2005 standards in reading fell in Key Stage 1 but very effective action by school managers led to improvement in 2006 and this has been sustained. However, the school's success with academic achievement does not stop with the core subjects. There is evidence of high achievement in art, music, information and communication technology (ICT) and French. It is this successful commitment to all-round education that makes achievement so strong. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve outstandingly well because of very well managed support and very capable teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

This school is full of happy, smiling children who give every impression of thoroughly enjoying their education. Their very good attendance bears witness to that. They concentrate hard in lessons and show great generosity of spirit in the way they explain how they care for others. Their sense of security and joyfulness is due to the excellent care and support staff give them. Very good relationships, high expectations and an exciting, challenging curriculum result in excellent behaviour. One member of the school council summed up succinctly the strong and very effective link between attitudes and academic achievement by saying, 'There's hardly any trouble here which means you can get on with your work!' The comment also exemplifies pupils' maturity - but it is a light-hearted maturity underpinned by the fact that everyone seems to get on so well together. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, with the development of pupils' social skills being exemplary. From Nursery to Year 6 pupils work very well together in small groups to develop their learning. Pupils' very good appreciation of healthy lifestyles is accurately reflected in their national Healthy Schools Award and its impact seen in the school's influential 'Healthy Eating Group', made up of staff and Year 6 pupils who meet regularly to discuss possible improvements to diet in school. Pupils successfully learn to take responsibility and to share their gifts and talents in the wider community. They are delightful, mature, polite and confident young people who are very well prepared for future life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

A major factor in the success of teaching is that it is consistently strong throughout the school. This helps pupils to progress smoothly from Nursery to Year 6. Pupils want to learn because they relate very well to their teachers and are given challenging tasks that they enjoy. Lessons are very well planned to meet pupils' learning needs and to excite them to learn. Teachers are particularly skilful at questioning pupils in a way that makes them think. They also take into account that pupils have different ways of learning and they plan with this in mind - inspectors were made particularly aware of this because members of the school council told them about it! The interactive whiteboards in each class are used consistently well as a stimulus for learning. A great strength of teaching is the very good use made of teaching assistants. They are always active, seeking to support and stimulate learning and are particularly effective in providing support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Work is marked conscientiously with good advice given to help pupils improve, especially in English.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is well rounded, allowing all groups of pupils to achieve very well academically and in their personal and social development. From Foundation Stage to Year 6, key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are given full rein to develop through planned projects involving other subjects and through events where skills are developed within a particular focus. A perfect example of this was Arts Week, when visitors included authors, a poet, a folk band, African drummers, visual artists and a circus performer. Pupils clearly delighted in developing a wide range of skills in the arts - unsurprising, then, that the school has an Artsmark Silver award. Corridors are filled with high quality examples of work in different subjects and with evidence of pupils' skills in physical education. The impact of a strong and effective focus on personal, social and health education is seen in well adjusted, socially mature pupils. Pupils participate eagerly in a very good range of after-school clubs. Sometimes a small event can demonstrate a school's success in 'capturing' its pupils and here it was a Friday afternoon after-school singing session with Year 6 pupils in preparation for an end of term production. To say that all the 120 or so pupils gave '100%' to this is hardly to do them, or their teachers, justice, but it showed very clearly the school's commitment to the all round curriculum development of its pupils, their appreciation of it and the outstanding achievement that resulted in great singing.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school takes exceptionally good care of its pupils. The proper arrangements for safeguarding pupils and for protecting their health and safety are in place. Staff have a deep and widespread knowledge of individuals in this very large school. Pupils say that they feel safe and are confident that they know adults they can turn to if they have concerns. Learning difficulties are identified quickly and very thorough support programmes implemented to address them. The high quality of the school's play facilities and the very careful way that breaks are timetabled means that pupils play safely and happily. The vast majority of parents are entirely supportive of the school's work. Strong support is given for pupils' academic development. They are well aware of their

learning targets and what to do to improve their work. They are encouraged to evaluate the quality of their own work in order to improve it.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

A major success of school management is to make this very large school have the friendliness and family atmosphere of a much smaller one. This takes a highly structured approach to deploying key staff and a strongly shared sense of valuing the individual child, and it works with outstanding success. The headteacher has developed a system of organising and developing other school leaders that makes them very effective in their different jobs. He is the 'lynch pin' in all this and an enormous influence on the school's success. The influence of the outstanding assistant headteachers is seen in the successful work on collective responsibility to ensure improved teamwork. Senior leaders in particular have a very thorough knowledge of how well pupils are doing and school managers act quickly to intervene to support individuals or, as recently with reading in Key Stage 1, to make improvements when a particular area has 'gone off the boil'. Staff teams work well and share a common culture of high achievement and valuing individual difference. Monitoring of school performance and the quality of teaching and learning is extensive and purposeful, leading to effective actions to make improvements. The governing body is very able. Its members bring specialist skills but also a tenacious desire to make sure that pupils are getting the very best deal out of their education. They are successful in ensuring the school gives outstanding value for money.

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Annex A

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

Achievement and standards

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

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	1
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?	1
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?	1

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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

Inspection of Churchtown Primary School, Southport, PR9 7NN.

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to thank you for your help when we visited your school recently and to tell you about our inspection findings. You told us how much you enjoy school and what a great place it is to be - and we agree! We think your school is outstanding in all parts of its work. It helps you to reach good standards and gives you lots of great chances to develop your skills and talents, whatever they may be. It also supports very well those children who sometimes find learning difficult. Your headteacher, teachers and other staff all work very hard and successfully to make all this happen.

Although yours is one of the biggest primary schools in the country it just doesn't seem like that! It has a real family feel to it, with everyone getting on so well together and knowing that they matter and are cared for. As a result, everyone has the chance to do well and your school is a very happy place. We think your behaviour is fantastic and that you take great care of each other and really appreciate all the good things you have. We enjoyed all we saw at your school and we don't think there is anything important that needs to be improved. However, knowing your headteacher and teachers, we are sure your school will keep on getting better and better and that you'll carry on doing your very important bit to make that happen.

Oh yes, and we couldn't sign off without saying what FANTASTIC singing all the Year 6 pupils were doing after school that Friday afternoon and what brilliant attitudes they were showing to prepare for their end of term production. Somehow, it just about summed up your school!

Best wishes for the future.