



Brackenwood Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105021
Local Authority Wirral
Inspection number 287094
Inspection dates 5–6 February 2007
Reporting inspector Frank Carruthers

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Pulford Road
School category	Community		Bebington, Wirral
Age range of pupils	5–7		Merseyside CH63 2HN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 6089117
Number on roll (school)	169	Fax number	0151 6090953
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dr Eric Mahers
		Headteacher	Mrs Carol Green
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
5–7	5–6 February 2007	287094

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is situated in a residential area of the Wirral on Merseyside. The school is popular and, though most pupils live in the local area, about one third come from further afield. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is about average, as is the proportion who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are very few pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds and learning English as an additional language. Almost all children have experienced some pre-school education before they start in the Reception classes and most have attended the pre-school class that is situated on the same site. The school has the National Healthy Schools Award (Bronze).

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school in which pupils achieve exceptionally well in both their personal and academic development. They reach high standards by the time they move on to the junior school at the end of Year 2. This is the result of the high quality of learning the school offers, its exceptional leadership and its excellent teamwork. Parents view the work of the school very highly. 'This is an excellent school and I have no hesitation in recommending it' is a typical comment made.

From the outset, children are made to feel welcome in the friendly, supportive environment of the Reception classes where they flourish and are challenged to do their best. They get off to a flying start because of the outstanding provision. Staff in the Foundation Stage have excellent expertise and the classes are very well resourced.

Standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science were significantly above average in assessments in Year 2 in 2006. In most years, almost all pupils achieve the expected level in these subjects and a good proportion reach the higher level 3. A high level of performance has been sustained since the time of the last inspection and standards of writing have improved since then. The pupils flourish because the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding with strength in depth across all classes, for example, in the quality of the relationships between staff and pupils, and in the experiences the pupils are offered in the outstanding curriculum. Marking of pupils' work is conscientious, but does not consistently point out how pupils may best improve their work through reference to their learning targets in mathematics and English. Pupils comment on how much they enjoy school, feel safe and know their targets for improvement. For their age, pupils have an excellent awareness of matters of personal safety and the need for a healthy and fit lifestyle.

The staff work very effectively as a team under the outstanding leadership provided by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, and governors fulfil their responsibilities exceptionally well. The school has made excellent progress since the time of the last inspection, which is an indication of the effectiveness of the school's procedures to evaluate itself. The staff are never complacent and always strive to improve. As a consequence, the school has excellent capacity to improve. The cost of educating a child at the school is similar to most primary schools and, given its high quality, it provides outstanding value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the marking of pupils' work in Years 1 and 2 so that it consistently shows what pupils need to do to improve and links even more closely to their targets in English and mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Most children start in the Reception classes with attainment that is in line with expected levels. They get off to an excellent start because of the outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage and, by the end of the Reception year, they have made very good progress. Almost all achieve the early learning goals in all areas of development and many are working at levels above them.

All pupils, both boys and girls, continue to achieve extremely well in Years 1 and 2 and develop as thoughtful, articulate learners. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the very few learning English as an additional language make the same exceptionally good progress as their classmates, because of the excellent support they receive. The school tracks pupils' performance very closely and takes action when underperformance is identified. For example, pupils' writing was identified as needing improvement and the school set about dealing with it successfully. In the most recent assessments in 2006, standards in writing were significantly above the national average. Overall, pupils achieve high standards in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), and this gives them an excellent start to the next stage of their education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils display excellent attitudes towards their work and are enthusiastic about lessons. Their behaviour is very good both in class and around school. This is a view shared by parents and visitors to school. The very few examples of challenging behaviour are handled extremely well by the staff. Pupils develop an excellent awareness of personal safety, healthy eating and healthy lifestyles. For example, they have learned a great deal from regular visits by the police and fire service and other community agencies, and they know much about getting to school safely because of the priority given to the school's travel plan.

Levels of attendance are broadly average. While unauthorised absences are very low, authorised absences are adversely affected by childhood illnesses prevalent in this age range. Pupils develop skills that support their future development exceedingly well. They learn how to work independently and with one another, and take on responsibilities in school exceptionally well, for instance, as play leaders. They have the opportunity to voice their opinions about school matters through the energetic school council. They have contributed much toward safe practice and healthy eating, for example, in monitoring how children dispose of wrappers and cartons in the school hall and in encouraging parents to provide healthy packed lunches.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy learning because lessons are very well planned and have a very good range of practical activities to interest them. A key strength of the teaching in all classes is how the staff use a variety of learning styles to engage pupils. They make excellent use of role-play and new technology, and build on previous learning particularly well so that they provide clear targets for the different levels of attainment in their classes. Relationships are very strong and, as a result, the learning environment is safe and very supportive. All staff use praise very well to boost pupils' confidence. Teaching assistants make an excellent contribution to group work and especially the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Well-timed strategies support these pupils exceedingly well. Assessments of pupils' progress are excellent and lead to teachers setting work that is challenging. Although marking of pupils' work is conscientious and regular, it does not consistently indicate how pupils' efforts might be improved.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school has developed an outstanding curriculum which is always in the process of review and improvement. It meets the needs of all pupils in literacy and numeracy exceptionally well and there is excellent provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The contribution of teaching assistants is particularly effective in this respect. The curriculum for the children in the Foundation Stage is outstanding. It has a clear focus on imaginative play, the promotion of speaking and listening skills and developing children's curiosity and exploration through first-hand experiences. The staff make good use of the outdoor areas and the school is now planning to create a covered area to promote continuous activities outdoors as well as inside.

Cross-curricular links, for instance between history, art, ICT and English, are clearly established and help consolidate pupils' learning. There are many opportunities taken to enrich the experiences of pupils: for instance, through specialist music teaching, physical education and ICT. Partnerships with secondary schools and specialist facilities are used particularly well in this respect. French, for instance, is taught by a visiting specialist to pupils in Year 2. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities not typically found for pupils in Key Stage 1. The curriculum makes an excellent contribution to promoting the pupils' awareness of a healthy and fit lifestyle; for example, in the gardening and cookery projects, in games and gymnastics taught by specialist coaches, and in the school's Active Play project.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school has a very caring ethos in which excellent relationships and a positive environment lead to excellent outcomes. This view is shared by parents, who report that they feel fully confident in the care and support their children receive. If parents have concerns, they feel confident the school will listen to their views. A typical comment is: 'The teachers are always friendly and approachable and very supportive of the children.' Child protection, safe recruitment of staff, risk assessment and health and safety procedures are all in place. Procedures to monitor attendance are excellent. Links with outside agencies, for instance, the learning and behaviour support teams, are very effective in supporting the work of the school. Support staff are very well trained to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or those who are more vulnerable in times of stress. Meticulous and highly effective assessment procedures help the school to identify pupils' needs from an early age and set challenging targets for them to achieve both academically and personally.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher over a sustained period of time has created an ethos in which self-review and school improvement are a constant focus of attention. There is excellent support from the deputy headteacher and other members of the senior management team. Teamwork is a key element that leads to the effectiveness of school improvement planning. This is clearly evident in the outstanding progress made since the last inspection, not only in responding to the key issues but in developing facilities and the curriculum so well. School self-evaluation is excellent and its views of its performance match exactly the judgements of this inspection. Governors have an excellent overview of the work of the school, offer a wide range of expertise to their roles and hold the senior managers to account very well.

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	1
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	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?	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.

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

We enjoyed our visit to your lovely school very much indeed. How lucky you are to have so many things to do every day and such good teachers and helpers to take care of you all!

Yours is an outstanding school. There are very many things in your school that are excellent.

- Your teachers are doing an excellent job taking care of you and helping you all to achieve so well.
- Your headteacher and deputy headteacher are outstanding in the way they lead your school.
- We were very impressed with how well you are doing in reading, writing, mathematics, science and ICT. This means you will have a great start when you get to the junior school.
- Your behaviour and attitudes to schoolwork are excellent.
- You are all learning really well about keeping fit, healthy and safe.
- Your Active Playtimes are great.

There is nothing much wrong in your school that needs to be put right but when your teachers mark your work we have asked them always to point out what you need to do to improve. Keep up the good work!