



Cathcart Street Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105048
Local Authority Wirral
Inspection number 287103
Inspection dates 27–28 September 2006
Reporting inspector Alan Hardwicke

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Dover Close
School category	Community		Birkenhead
Age range of pupils	3–11		Merseyside CH41 3JY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 6477349
Number on roll (school)	154	Fax number	-
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr B Bartlett
		Headteacher	Mr M Randall
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	27–28 September 2006	287103

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. Pupil numbers are falling steadily, resulting in reductions in staffing. The school is in the centre of Birkenhead, serving an area with high levels of complex social problems, high unemployment, mobility and ill-health. Over two-thirds of pupils are eligible for free school meals - well above the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is also well above the national average. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The school has achieved Basic Skills Quality Mark for the third time, North West Inclusion Award (2005), and the Sustaining Success Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Cathcart Street Primary is a good school. It enables its pupils to achieve well overall. Pupils are happy and behave well. They have positive attitudes to their work and know how to lead healthy lives. From very low standards on entry, pupils make good progress overall and leave Year 6 with broadly average standards. Children in the Foundation Stage and pupils with average ability in Years 1 to 6 make consistently good progress as a result of good teaching. The very good teaching and high quality support provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enable them to make outstanding progress. In Years 3 to 6, more able pupils achieve as well as they should in English but not in mathematics and science: this is because the work set for them in mathematics and science is not challenging enough. Attendance is unsatisfactory and the achievement of the most frequent absentees is depressed as a result. The punctuality of a minority of pupils is unsatisfactory.

The well planned and enriching curriculum, together with the consistently good level of care and support provided, make significant contributions to pupils' enjoyment of learning, their good personal development and their good achievement. The quality of teaching is good. As a result, pupils find their work fun and interesting. They know what to do to improve because the school has successful strategies for assessing their learning and sharing this information with them. A good range of out of class activities, such as music and sports clubs, is supported strongly by pupils and contributes well to their good personal, social and cultural development.

Leadership and management are good. The school's view of itself is accurate. Last year, managers reacted quickly and effectively to a drop in standards and morale caused by a series of unavoidable disruptions to the smooth running of the school. There has been a marked improvement this year in standards, achievement and morale because of the measures taken. The school's capacity to improve is good because of the strides it has made since the last inspection, the effective action it has taken to address weaknesses and the good quality of its plans for the future. It provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievement of more able pupils in mathematics and science in Years 3 to 6.
- Improve attendance to much nearer the national average and improve the punctuality of the most frequent latecomers.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

On entry to the Nursery, children have skills and knowledge that are well below the standard expected nationally for their age. They make good progress in all areas of their learning in the Reception class, although many do not reach nationally expected

standards by the time they enter Year 1. Most pupils make good progress throughout their time in the school and leave Year 6 with broadly average standards. Pupils with learning difficulties, who constitute a significantly large group in the school, make outstanding progress because of very good teaching and support. Average attainers also achieve well. More able pupils achieve the standards they should in English but do not always do as well as they could in mathematics and science in Years 3 to 6. This is because the work they are set is often too easy. The achievements and standards of those pupils whose attendance is poor are not as good as that of other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

In the Foundation Stage, children flourish in a warm, welcoming and challenging atmosphere. Teachers and other adults provide a very good example to pupils in their daily use of the school's code of conduct. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. For example, a close link with a school in Belfast helps pupils gain a good understanding of how children in different areas live. Pupils develop a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and they welcome lunchtime food choices. As they get older, pupils increasingly make positive contributions to the community, such as paper re-cycling, as monitors and in leading assemblies. Nevertheless, even more could be done in this area to encourage pupils to take greater responsibility. Most pupils manage their own behaviour very well, although a small minority need extra help to behave consistently well. Exclusion is used infrequently and only when other measures have not succeeded. Attendance has declined over the past year.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use the school's code of conduct effectively to ensure high standards of behaviour. They plan lessons carefully and have high expectations of pupils, although the level of challenge in mathematics and science for more able pupils in Years 3 to 6 is not sufficient to help these pupils achieve as well as they should. Teachers establish class routines effectively. A good pace of work is maintained so that pupils generally work hard and move quickly from one activity to the next. Teachers use questions well and ensure that different groups, such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language, are fully included in lessons. Pupils generally enjoy their work. They know what they need to do to improve because of successful assessment and target-setting strategies. However, teachers do not make enough use of opportunities to develop basic numeracy skills in different subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is carefully planned to overcome pupils' low starting points in basic skills. In the Foundation Stage, the curriculum is very stimulating and good use is made of both the indoor and outdoor facilities. Great emphasis is given to learning to play and share together, and to develop speaking and listening skills.

Throughout the school the basic curriculum is well planned to meet the needs of most pupils. Careful attention is given to safety, and healthy life choices are well promoted through Healthy Eating activities. The school welcomes a wide range of visitors, to ensure pupils understand how to keep safe and healthy, including in physical education activities. Good use is made of themed days, such as 'Healthy Activity Day' to promote a healthy lifestyle.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares well for its pupils. This makes a major contribution to their good achievements and effective personal development. The school's ethos of valuing every pupil equally is well embodied in its daily work. The special educational needs coordinator, social inclusion coordinator and all staff very positively support vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and this contributes very well to their outstanding progress.

Pupils are clear about their personal targets and they rightly say that teachers are good at explaining how they can improve. There are effective systems to track and record pupils' progress right through the school, which contribute well to pupils' good achievements. Procedures for safeguarding pupils match requirements and detailed risk assessments ensure the safety of all who work in the school. However, the school's strategies to ensure good attendance and punctuality are not fully effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Senior staff have successfully steered the school through a recent, extremely difficult period. The headteacher has set clear direction for the school and sustained an unambiguous focus on raising standards and keeping them high. He has ensured that the curriculum is directed to meet the range of complex social circumstances associated with an area of declining population, high mobility and difficult social situations. In this way the school has truly responded to the needs of the local community. It has also been committed to putting all pupils' needs at the heart of the school's daily life. Equality of opportunity for all pupils is, therefore, good overall.

Senior managers make good use of the information gathered from the thorough procedures for checking on pupils' progress and teachers' effectiveness to bring about improvements in standards and in teaching and learning.

Governors bring a variety of talents to their role, but all are united in their concern for everyone in the school. They act as critical friends and some are linked to different subjects. They monitor standards, hold the school to account, and ensure best value. They discharge their statutory responsibilities well.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
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	1

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	4
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	2

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?	2
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

We enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for talking to us and showing us the things you do. Yours is a good school.

It does the following things well:

- in lessons you make good progress, behave well and work hard and do as well as children of your age should
- most of you try your hardest and your teachers and other adults are good at making lessons interesting and showing you how to improve
- you enjoy playtimes, but some of you say you would like more games to play outside.

There are two things we have asked the school do better:

- those of you who find your work easier than most other pupils could be helped to do even better, especially in mathematics and science
- some of you should come to school more often and to be on time. Remember, you miss so much when you are absent or late.

Your Awards assembly was very enjoyable, and all the children who took part did very well. The children who won Monitor Badges were very proud of their good work and behaviour - well done!