



Bidston Avenue Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105060
Local Authority Wirral
Inspection number 287106
Inspection dates 24–25 January 2007
Reporting inspector Frank Carruthers

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Tollemache Road
School category	Community		Birkenhead
Age range of pupils	4–11		Merseyside CH41 0DQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 6521594
Number on roll (school)	406	Fax number	0151 6532064
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr George Davies
		Headteacher	Mr B Dawson
Date of previous school inspection	10 September 2001		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 24–25 January 2007	Inspection number 287106
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average primary school draws pupils mainly from Claughton, with about one third coming from Bidston. Almost all pupils are White British; very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds or learn English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average, as is the proportion that has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has two main buildings; the infant building houses a pre-school class, which has been inspected separately. Recent changes to the senior leadership team occurred at the end of the autumn term, when a deputy headteacher and an assistant headteacher left the school for promotion. The school has achieved the bronze Eco-school Award, the Healthy Schools Award, the Activemark and Artsmark. It is in a Creative Partnership with other schools and has the Investors in People Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides a good education for pupils and has some outstanding features including provision in the Foundation Stage and for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and partnerships with other schools and agencies. Pupils enjoy school, have positive attitudes to learning and behave well. They have good awareness of personal safety and how to be healthy and fit. This is because of the school's good procedures for care, guidance and support and its commitment to promoting a healthy lifestyle.

Pupils achieve well, given levels of attainment that are below those expected of children on entry to the Reception classes. By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. This good progress is the result of effective teaching and learning. Some outstanding lessons were seen in the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2. A strength of the teaching is the focus on promoting pupils' speaking and listening skills, which is having a significant impact on the standards that younger pupils achieve in writing by the end of Year 2. The pace of lessons and the positive relationships between staff and pupils are further strengths. Standards in mathematics in Year 6 dipped to just below average in 2006, however, and have shown a recent decline in Year 2. The school has begun to address this but the full impact of the work has yet to be seen. Standards of presentation in pupils' workbooks are too variable across age groups and require improvement. Pupils' learning is generally good, especially by those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but pupils are not certain about their targets and what they need to do to improve their work in mathematics. The marking of pupils' work is not consistently linked to targets and lesson objectives.

The curriculum is good and there are several initiatives under way to enrich and enliven the pupils' learning; these are already having a positive impact. The leadership, management and governance of the school are good. Senior staff monitor and evaluate the work of the school closely and their evaluation of how the school is performing matches the judgements in this report, except in respect of the Foundation Stage, where their view was over cautious. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, especially in information and communication technology (ICT), although improvements in standards in mathematics have not been as marked as those in English and science. The school gives good value for money and has good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop pupils' understanding of their targets and how they can improve their work in order to raise standards in mathematics.
- Ensure the marking of pupils' work is more directly linked to the pupils' targets and learning objectives.
- Raise teachers' expectations of standards of presentation of pupils' work so that it is consistently good in all classes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Reception children make rapid gains in their learning and, by the end of the year, the majority are in line with expected levels in most areas of learning. Attainment in communication, language and literacy is slightly lower, because a large minority of children start school with poor speech and limited skills of communication. Some, however, are working above the expected goals by the time they enter Year 1.

In Years 1 and 2, progress continues to be good, especially in reading and writing. This is because of the impressive focus the staff have put on speaking, listening and story telling. The school has suitable strategies in place to reverse a declining trend in mathematics.

In Years 3 to 6, pupils' achievement is good overall. Standards in English and science are broadly average but dipped in mathematics last year, partly because of untypical underperformance by girls. Priority has been given in the current school improvement plan to halting the decline but it is too early to see its impact. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good and at times excellent progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. The very few pupils learning English as an additional language also do well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Several initiatives, such as the teaching of social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL), promote the pupils' social and moral understanding very well. Attendance levels are at the national average and there have been very few exclusions. School council members commented how they enjoy coming to school because of their supportive class teachers and the care they receive from them. On the few occasions when bullying occurs, pupils know who to turn to and staff deal with incidents effectively. The great majority of parents endorse this positive view of the pupils' personal development.

Through the school's achievement of national awards, pupils have a good awareness of health and fitness as well as how to keep safe. Visiting specialists contribute well to these aspects. The school is viewed by its partners in the community as 'a vital outlet supporting youth activities' and promotes citizenship well. Pupils have good understanding of responsibility and help pupils younger than themselves around school. They support community activities well and raise money for several charities. Pupils

are well prepared for secondary school, for instance through cooperating and working together in teams.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. It is outstanding in the Reception classes because of the excellent teamwork and expertise of staff. There are examples of outstanding teaching in Years 1, 3 and 6. Strengths include teachers' use of praise to raise confidence and self-esteem, the level of challenge in lessons and good questioning strategies. Positive relationships between pupils and staff are a key feature and, in the best lessons, humour helps to make learning interesting and pupils enthusiastic. All staff make excellent use of ICT in their own classrooms and the specialist rooms. The focus on speaking and listening, which begins in the youngest age-groups, is having a significant impact on pupils' enthusiasm for reading and standards of story-telling and writing. Staff promote high quality learning by making best use of visual, auditory and other techniques to help boys achieve well. However, the final parts of lessons are not always effective in consolidating learning.

The quality of teachers' marking varies and is not linked closely enough to pupils' targets and lesson objectives, although there is some good practice, for example in Years 1 and 6. Standards of presentation vary because some teachers' expectations are not high enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It promotes health, personal, social and emotional development well. Planned developments to improve the mathematics curriculum are yet to have an impact. Outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage successfully develops children's imaginations and their social and communication skills. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which includes high-quality support from teachers, well trained teaching assistants and good intervention strategies, is excellent; there are very effective links with a local special school.

The curriculum is enriched by initiatives such as thematic links between subjects that, although recent, are already increasing pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Outstanding partnerships with other schools and agencies support creativity in learning, physical education across all year groups and ICT, which was an area for improvement at the previous inspection. Elements such as video conferencing and film making, as well as residential visits, a good range of out-of-school clubs and visitors, enliven pupils' learning. Opportunities to learn French in Years 3 and 6 or the violin in Year 4 give good support to talented pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Procedures to ensure safety, child protection, safe recruitment of staff and risk assessment are in place. Pupils report they feel well cared for and safe in school, and parents agree. They find the staff 'approachable and helpful' and that school enhances the children's confidence. The arrangements for pupils to make the transition from the Reception to Year 1 and from Year 6 to the next phase of education are outstanding, and there are good links between pre-school providers and the Reception staff. Support and guidance for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are enhanced by excellent support from external agencies, individual education plans that have clear targets, and good partnerships with parents. Vulnerable pupils, for example, are given good support during times of stress and are fully included in all activities. The tracking of pupils' progress is very detailed and is used very well to predict progress and identify underachievement. Pupils have individual targets in English and mathematics but there is insufficient emphasis on them in mathematics, so pupils are not certain about the next steps in their learning. There are instances of good practice when pupils evaluate the quality of each other's written work in English, for example in Year 6, but this is not consistent in classes across Years 3 to 5.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is managing effectively recent changes to the management structure; he is successfully rebuilding the senior leadership team following the promotion of two senior colleagues. His particular expertise in assessment and analysing data helps the school's self-evaluation processes very well and gives the school an accurate picture of its performance. Standards of writing in Years 1 and 2, and of ICT in all age groups, have improved significantly since the previous inspection as a result of the work of the headteacher and senior subject leaders. Teamwork is a particular strength among staff. The role of middle managers is a focus for attention in the current school improvement plan but they are not yet involved enough in monitoring teaching and learning.

School improvement planning is good because it focuses on key aspects of the pupils' performance. The school is well resourced and includes a new library and ICT suites, together with interactive whiteboards in all classrooms. All staff, including administrative, cleaning and support staff, are effectively deployed. School governance is good. The governing body is extremely well led by the chair and there is a high level of challenge in governors' work.

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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?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
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?	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	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

Thank you very much for your help when we inspected your school. Please pass on our thanks to the other children we met and spoke to while we were with you. We enjoyed our visit very much. Now we want to share with you what we thought about your school.

Your school is giving you a good standard of education. This means that you are making good progress and there are many things that the staff do well for you.

These are some of the things that are good:

- the children in the Reception classes get off to a great start thanks to the excellent work of the staff
- the headteacher and staff take good care of you, helping you all to be fit, safe and healthy
- they support really well anyone who finds learning hard
- you are achieving well in subjects such as English, science and ICT
- your behaviour and attitudes to learning are good and you are growing into sensible pupils who want to learn
- the staff are teaching you interesting topics and themes that cover several subjects of the curriculum.

To help you to do better, we have asked the staff to make sure:

- you know your targets for improvement, in mathematics especially, and what you need to do to achieve them
- when they mark your work in English and mathematics they make your targets clearer to help you achieve them
- the presentation of your work in your workbooks and folders is the best it can be.

You have a big part to play in this: make sure you know your targets and work as hard as you can to achieve them, and keep your work neat and tidy.