



Birkenhead Christ Church CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105064
Local Authority Wirral
Inspection number 287109
Inspection date 9 March 2007
Reporting inspector Michael McIlroy HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Mount Grove
School category	Voluntary controlled		Birkenhead
Age range of pupils	3-11		Wirral CH41 2UJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 6521278
Number on roll (school)	244	Fax number	0151 6537681
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs J Monty
		Headteacher	Mrs Marie Szydłowska
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is of average size. It serves an area of considerable social and economic deprivation and half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well above average. Few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, but there is a small group of pupils for whom English is an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. There are several pupils with a statement of special educational need.

The school holds the Activemark award and 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

This is a good school where pupils achieve well. Pupils enter the school with skills and abilities that are well below average. They get off to a good start in the well-led and organised Foundation Stage where they make good progress, particularly in their personal development. Although progress remains good in Years 1 and 2, the standards pupils achieve at the end of Key Stage 1 are well below average, particularly in writing. In Key Stage 2, the progress made by pupils in the last three years is consistently good. They achieve best in mathematics and science, but in 2006 did less well in English, due to weaknesses in writing. By the end of their time in the school, pupils have achieved standards that are broadly average. When their low starting point on entry to the school is considered, this represents good progress overall.

Pupils' good achievement is founded on good teaching, some of which is outstanding. It is lively, fast-paced and reflects high expectations of what learners can achieve. Good teaching is underpinned by effective use of assessment data which enables pupils to be given relevant targets and which allows work to be well matched to learners' needs. Assessment information is updated regularly and well used to identify which groups of pupils and aspects of learning the school needs to focus on in order to improve. The effective curriculum is strongly focused on the core subjects, which are sometimes taught by specialists. Learning is well supported by appropriate homework, extra classes and good use of additional adults.

The school provides very good care and support for its pupils. Excellent links with other agencies have contributed to pupils' good behaviour and improved attendance. Parents are kept well informed of the school's work and a home-school liaison officer maintains good links with parents. There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Their needs are identified early and their progress is carefully monitored and reviewed. Consequently, these pupils make good progress. Pupils for whom English is an additional language also make good progress. However, there are inconsistencies in the academic guidance that pupils receive. Not all marking gives pupils sufficient guidance on the next steps they should take to improve their work.

Pupils' good personal development and well-being reflect the strong emphasis the school places on this. For example, the school council was involved in the recent appointment process for the new headteacher. Pupils know how to stay safe. They have good opportunities to exercise responsibility. The school has worked hard to bring about improvements in attendance but despite its best efforts this remains below average.

The school is well led and managed. The effective senior leadership team, which consists of the new headteacher and deputy headteacher, has maintained the school's commitment to improve and has accurately identified what it needs to do to achieve this. They are well supported in their work by other managers. Governance is good and provides effective support and challenge for the school. Parents who returned questionnaires are very supportive of the work of the school.

The good leadership and management of the school at all levels and the way in which issues from the last report have been addressed demonstrate that the school has good capacity for improvement. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing across the school.
- Improve the academic guidance which pupils receive.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter the school with standards in learning and skills that are well below average. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage, particularly in their personal and social development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Nonetheless, by the time they enter Key Stage 1 a majority have not yet achieved the Early Learning Goals expected for this age group. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1. However, due to their low starting point and weaknesses, the standards achieved by pupils in 2006 were well below average. Pupils performed best in mathematics and did least well in writing.

Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2. In the past three years, their overall achievement has been significantly above average. In the same period, achievement in mathematics and science has been consistently well above average. In 2006, achievement in English declined from the high levels of previous years. Nonetheless, it remained above average. Standards over the past five years have alternated between being just above and just below average. In 2006, they were slightly below. Results in mathematics and science were average, but those in English declined to well below average. This was due to weaknesses in writing. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made good progress, due to the good support they receive. Pupils eligible for free school meals and those with English as an additional language also made good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The inspection agrees with the school's judgement that this outcome is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Their behaviour is good overall. Pupils are well supervised, play sensibly and know how to keep safe. They know who to turn to in the event of any bullying or if they have any concerns. Attendance has risen recently following a number of effective school initiatives, but remains below average. Attitudes to work are good overall. Pupils appreciate the benefits of healthy eating and of leading a healthy lifestyle.

Pupils' spiritual awareness is well developed through the school's good links with the local church and assemblies where they have time to reflect. Pupils' moral and social understanding is also good. They are thoughtful and helpful to one another due to

the strong emphasis the school places on developing their personal and social skills. An example of this emphasis is the 'pledge cards' carried by pupils which set out the school's expectations for behaviour and attitudes. Cultural awareness is well developed through the celebrations of festivals from other faiths and links with a school in India. From an early age, pupils have good opportunities to exercise responsibility. Some act as water and fruit monitors and others serve on the elected school council. Councillors are confident that their suggestions to improve the school are listened to and acted upon. Older pupils have opportunities to help younger ones improve their reading. Pupils' future economic well-being is well developed by their good social skills and the good progress which they make in their numeracy and literacy skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall and some of it is outstanding. It is characterised by high expectations, good relationships between adults and pupils, a fast pace of learning in lessons and good use of resources such as interactive whiteboards. Time is well used and pupils are clear what they have to do. Work is well matched to learners' different abilities and more able pupils are effectively challenged. Less able pupils, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are well supported by skilled teaching assistants. Where teaching is good or better, pupils are enthusiastic learners, keen to contribute and work sensibly on their own when asked to do so. Where teaching is occasionally satisfactory, the level of noise is too high and sessions at the end of lessons are not always well used. Consequently, some pupils do not make as much progress as they could. Assessment data are well used to inform teachers' planning. However, there are some inconsistencies in the quality of planning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and is carefully focused on meeting pupils' basic needs through its strong provision in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Information and communication technology has a high profile. Learning is supported by a number of intervention strategies, including a well attended 'study club' for Year 6 pupils. Pupils' reading skills are well developed through a targeted 'reading recovery' programme. Homework is linked to learning in class and increases in quantity as pupils get older. Some pupils have the opportunity to learn French and German. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully included in the life of the school and, as a result, enjoy good opportunities to make progress in their learning. The school makes good use of the nearby 'sports barn' for physical education activities. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities such as football, judo, basketball and drama. Year 6 pupils have the opportunity to participate in a residential visit.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are very well cared for and supported. Statutory measures for the safeguarding of pupils are in place as are risk assessments. Effective induction arrangements exist for new pupils, including home visits prior to their starting school. Older learners are well prepared for the next stage of their education. There are very good links with other agencies, such as Surestart and the school medical service. A breakfast club, run by the school, encourages good attendance and punctuality.

Pupils receive appropriate guidance on growing up and on the hazards of dangerous substances. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language are well supported. For example, the needs of pupils with hearing difficulties are met by the skilful use of specialized audio technology by staff. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early. Individual education and behaviour plans are regularly reviewed and both parents and pupils are closely involved in this process. Vulnerable pupils are very well supported by the home-school liaison officer who works closely with families and other agencies, such as a local project designed to improve behaviour.

The progress of all pupils is carefully tracked and regularly analysed by the school. This is well used to establish targets. Older pupils know their targets and Year 6 pupils are aware of the National Curriculum levels they are working at and those they are aiming towards. Marking is satisfactory. Not all pupils receive sufficient academic guidance on the next steps they need to take to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall. The new headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has successfully ensured continuity in the school's approach and is focused on improving pupils' achievement further. She provides clear direction for the school and has quickly won the support of parents. Her evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate. The existing school improvement plan has been successfully built upon with action plans which reflect the school's good analysis of recent data. The school knows what it needs to do in order to improve standards further. Issues identified in the last inspection report have been well addressed. A number of initiatives have been introduced in order to raise achievement, such as the changes in curriculum times and how some staff are deployed. Teaching and learning are regularly monitored. Shortcomings in teaching have been identified and tackled. A good level of training keeps staff abreast of national developments. Teachers' subject expertise is well used to boost achievement, for example, in science at Key Stage 2.

There are strengths in leadership throughout the school. The Foundation Stage manager provides good leadership for her team. The coordinator for special educational needs leads her area very well. Subject leadership is good overall. Subject managers know the strengths and weaknesses of their areas and have drawn up appropriate action

plans. The assessment manager also leads his area of the school's work well. In addition to the effective senior management team, a new leadership team has been established to further develop the skills of key staff.

The school regularly seeks and analyses the views and attitudes of pupils. Parents are kept well informed about the work which is planned for pupils. Parents who returned questionnaires are strongly supportive of the school, although some would welcome more information about how their views are taken into account. Governance is good. Governors are kept well informed about the school's work. Finances are carefully administered and governors provide both challenge and support for the new headteacher.

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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	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	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 for being so polite and helpful when I inspected your school recently. I am writing to let you know what I found. Some of the best things which I found were:

- your school is a good school
- your behaviour is good
- you are well taught by your teachers
- you are well looked after by the adults in the school
- you make good progress in your learning
- your school works very well with other people to make sure you are well cared for and supported.

I have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to make some changes to make things better for you. These are:

- to help all of you to do better in writing
- to make sure that you get more help with your work so that all of you know what you must do to improve your work.

Once again, many thanks for all your help and politeness when I visited your school.