

The Beacon Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131311
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	293735
Inspection dates	8–9 October 2007
Reporting inspector	John Ashton

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	196
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Ann Hoyland
Headteacher	Ms Sally Aspinwall
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2005
School address	Heyworth Street Liverpool Merseyside L5 3QG
Telephone number	0151 2634206
Fax number	0151 2631583

Age group	3-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average Church of England primary school serves the Everton district of inner city Liverpool, an area with high levels of social and economic disadvantage. There are 196 pupils on roll, including 34 in the Nursery. A slightly higher than average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The large majority of pupils are White British but around one pupil in ten is from a minority ethnic group and one in eight speaks English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good and much improved school has travelled an enormous distance in the last three years since being judged to be in need of special measures. It has tackled well, and with increasing success, the issues from the last inspection, demonstrating a thoroughly good capacity to improve.

From very low standards when they enter school, pupils make good progress throughout the school, achieving much closer to national average standards by the time they leave. Their personal development and the curriculum they receive, especially the wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, are especially good. The care, support and guidance the school provides for them are first rate, especially the excellent academic guidance. The 'Beacon' system of tracking pupils' progress is now used by many schools elsewhere in the region. The quality of the teaching and learning has been significantly improved but it is not yet consistently good throughout the school. This is because teaching assistants are not always used to best effect and pupils are not yet involved enough in the assessment of their own learning.

That the parents are very supportive of the school is clear from their questionnaire returns and their discussions with inspectors. Parents spoke of how much their children now enjoy the school. 'My daughter can't wait to get out each morning to get to school', is a typical comment.

Older pupils speak highly of the improvements in their time in the school. They say they feel even safer than they did, they work harder, the work is more interesting, they are able to play a fuller part in helping the school community and are well aware of their own targets for improvement. Their understanding of Britain as a diverse society is developing well. Their enjoyment of school and good preparation for the future are shown by attendance, which is now broadly average, and good progress in the key areas of learning, especially writing, reading for comprehension and mathematics.

Leadership and management are good, especially the excellent partnership of headteacher and deputy headteacher. They have led the drive for continual improvement and created a strong and effective team ethos among all staff. The senior leadership is well supported by a newly invigorated and thoroughly challenging governing body, plus sterling support from officers of the local authority. It has also made good use of its own expertise to develop teaching and learning and the role of subject leaders with notable success.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Very good induction procedures help young children settle into school quickly. Nursery staff make effective use of the information gathered from induction visits and parents to plan activities which meet the needs of the new children. On arrival, many children have weak language skills and find playing and sharing toys difficult but good provision helps them learn these, and many other skills, at a good rate. Letter sounds are taught thoroughly. Children enjoy the multi-sensory approach used by staff and join in enthusiastically with the hand gestures and sounds. Number work is taught very well because it is made relevant to the children. For example, they excitedly tackle counting fruit for the other classes after identifying, with help, a numeral on an 'order form'. Children make good progress from their differing starting points. Nevertheless, standards prior to joining Year 1 are well below average, particularly

in children's language skills. They declined in 2007 because staff were overcautious when assessing what children could do. The school has reviewed practice and more consistent ways of assessing children's learning are now in place.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of pupils' learning by improving the use of teaching assistants and involving pupils' more in assessing their own learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From well below average starting points on entry to the school, pupils make good progress by the time they reach the end of Year 6. This is because of the increasingly good teaching, the well planned curriculum, and the school's exceptionally good tracking of pupils' progress. Although relatively few children reach their early learning goals in the Nursery and Reception classes, this still represents good progress for these children. By the time they reach the end of Year 2, standards are much closer to but still below the national average. Those pupils who left Year 6 in 2006 achieved standards which were just below the national average in science, broadly average in mathematics and significantly below average in English. The school responded by focusing heavily upon improving pupils' reading and writing skills and in 2007, there were signs of success and the governors' targets were met in English and Science, and only narrowly missed in mathematics. The progress made by all the different groups of pupils generally follows the pattern of progress made by the rest of the class.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their smiling faces each day. Lunchtimes are especially popular, with older pupils being very sensible in their role as play leaders. These factors contribute towards the very rapid improvement in pupils' attendance, which is now broadly average. Pupils are very active in breaks and during the extensive physical education provision. They also select sensibly from the good range of foods available for school lunch and enjoy their afternoon fruit. Relationships are positive and pupils report that there is little bullying and few racist incidents. They know how to respond if any should take place and are confident that adults would deal with the situation. Behaviour has improved markedly since the last inspection and is now consistently good. The school recycles much of its waste via the good work of the eco-committee. Pupils know that their views are heard through the school council meetings and have seen some of their suggested changes take place. Links with the parish are well established and contribute positively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is good. Teamwork is promoted very well through the rewards system and during the residential visits. These abilities coupled with the good progress pupils make in their basic skills prepare pupils well for their next school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy their lessons because the teachers make them interesting and ensure that pupils are actively involved as much as possible. Most of the teaching, especially at Key Stage 2, holds

pupils' attention well, challenges them appropriately, is conducted at a lively pace, and engages pupils in useful discussions with their 'talk partners'. Lessons are well planned to meet the specific needs of pupils, and most classroom assistants are well deployed to support those who find learning difficult. Teachers' skilful use of interactive whiteboards and the children's good use of individual whiteboards, help to enliven the lessons and help pupils to concentrate and learn effectively. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are variable across the school and sometimes across different subjects. They are at their highest in Key Stage 2 where pace and focus are at their strongest. The school has made significant progress in developing teachers' assessment skills in order to improve pupils' learning but there is still work to do in, for example, making better use of valuable teaching assistance and involving pupils more in the assessment of their own learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs of the pupils well. The emphasis on literacy and numeracy has led to a significant rise in standards over the last two years. The planning of other subjects has recently been revised. It is based now on developing skills and pupils have greater opportunities to use their writing abilities purposefully. It is, however, too early to assess its impact on pupils' learning. Good use is made of experts to help pupils learn French, as well as a wide range of sports and music. A very positive feature is the advanced work pupils are doing with the city learning centre. Enrichment activities are excellent. Most pupils benefit from at least one of the broad range of clubs which cater for all abilities and interests. The pupils' view of the world and their social skills are significantly enhanced by the residential visits to the Lake District and France.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

All staff place the care and support of the pupils as their highest priority and are effective in carrying out this duty. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place. Rigorous measures to reduce pupil absence have had a major impact on improving the pupils' attendance very quickly. The school has successfully improved behaviour through a systematic approach to managing classes and a very effective reward system. An excellent feature of this, which also helps to minimise accidents, is the availability of equipment at lunchtime and the positive way pupils and staff join in games together. Parents are well informed about their child's progress and about what they will learn during the term. Academic guidance is truly excellent. Pupils' progress is followed very closely and the information used to inform both teacher and pupil of what to aim for and what needs to be improved.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Effective leadership and good teamwork are the keys to the school's substantial improvement in recent years: leadership which rightly concentrates upon raising academic standards and promoting the well-being of every child in the school.

Regular and systematic monitoring of all aspects of the work of the school provides a firm knowledge base upon which to make informed judgements from year-to-year. The excellent

partnership of headteacher and deputy headteacher has earned the respect of parents, pupils and staff alike and brought about significant improvements in the areas for development left at the last inspection. School improvement planning is sharp and clear and regularly updated. Governors are well informed and well led. They are supportive of the school but also willing to ask questions and to challenge the school in a positive and helpful way. Finances are prudently managed and in good order.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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?	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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Inspection of The Beacon Church of England Primary School, Liverpool,

L5 3QG

Mr Madeley and I really enjoyed visiting your school recently. A very special thank you must go to those children who gave up part of their lunch break to talk to us. They told us so many good things about the school. So, also, did your parents in the questionnaires they sent us and when groups of them talked to us.

We agree with you that your school is much improved recently and is now going from strength to strength. You are all well looked after and kept safe, taught in an interesting way and have a really good range of activities to interest you in the classroom and to keep you active in the playground.

We have asked your teachers to involve all the other adults who work in your classrooms as much as possible in checking your learning and to involve all of you more in assessing your own work.

You can play your part in this by continuing to attend every day and by always working as hard as we saw you all doing.

Best wishes to you all for the future.