

Bedford Drive Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104988
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	308728
Inspection dates	23–24 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Aitken

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	379
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr S Preston
Headteacher	Mrs E Mullens
Date of previous school inspection	18 April 2005
School address	Bedford Drive Rock Ferry Birkenhead Merseyside CH42 6RT
Telephone number	0151 645 1561
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large school, situated to the south of Birkenhead. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. In the last year the school has gained the National Healthy Schools Award and the Activemark Award. Four of the staff, two with leadership responsibilities and including the new headteacher, are currently on maternity leave. Other colleagues have just returned from maternity leave. The deputy headteacher is currently acting as headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It works hard to meet the diverse pastoral needs of its pupils. The good quality of the school's arrangements to ensure pupils feel settled, secure and happy is reflected in their personal development and well-being, which are good.

By the end of Year 6, standards are below average. Pupils achieve well in most aspects of their learning in the Foundation Stage and satisfactorily in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. In Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress in science where they achieve broadly average standards. Progress in English is satisfactory. Achievement in mathematics, however, is barely adequate because the subject has not benefited from the same consistent quality of development.

The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' all-round education. It supports their personal well-being very effectively. The school has made good use of partnerships to raise pupils' awareness and practice of healthy lifestyles. This is reflected in the school's recent awards. The school has successful systems for promoting pupils' welfare. The code of conduct is consistently applied, and there are several incentives for encouraging appropriate behaviour. The well established SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) programme provides ample opportunities for pupils to reflect and consider the feelings of others. The curriculum is having an increasingly beneficial impact on the quality of pupils' academic work, for example in information and communication technology (ICT). The large variety of physical and sporting activities is popular with the pupils. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. While some of the teaching is good, the overall quality is not consistent enough to ensure that pupils make good, rather than satisfactory progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge and manage pupils well, but occasional weaknesses in the use of personal targets hold back pupils' progress.

The school is managing its complex staffing situation well through the creation of small teams to share the responsibility for overseeing pupils' progress. Managers are doing their best to ensure that the school does not stand still during this transitional period. Senior leaders have a good awareness of the strengths and areas for development in the school as demonstrated in their accurate self-evaluation. The school has made satisfactory improvement since its previous inspection. It has satisfactory capacity for further improvement and offers satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children join the Nursery with knowledge and skills that are well below those that are expected for their age, particularly in their personal, social and literacy development. They make good progress to reach levels which are, nevertheless, still below those expected when they join Year 1. Good induction procedures ensure that children settle happily into school, develop positive attitudes to learning and quickly acquire independence. Children's learning is well planned, with a clear emphasis each day on a separate area of learning while maintaining a common element of personal, social and emotional development throughout the week. Good use is made of the outside facilities to develop children's skills, but physical constraints mean that this quality of continuous provision is currently compromised for children in Reception. Good teaching lies at the heart of children's good progress. This is supported by well established assessment systems, which ensure that each child's needs are carefully considered in lesson planning. The Foundation Stage is led and managed well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and achievement, especially in mathematics.
- Ensure teaching and learning are of consistently good quality.
- Make better use of targets to boost pupils' achievement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Results at the end of Year 2 are invariably below average, but they declined in 2007, especially in reading. School leaders identified this weakness and have acted robustly both to support the current Year 3 pupils and to ensure improved standards in the current Year 2. Results at the end of Year 6, while remaining below average, have been improving steadily and this trend is being maintained in the current Year 6. There is, however, some variation in attainment and achievement between the subjects. Progress in science and, to a lesser extent, in English, is better than in mathematics, where pupils display some uncertainty in mental calculations. Standards in science are higher because very successful action has been taken to improve pupils' investigative skills. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made unsatisfactory progress in the last two years. Recent measures are proving successful in ensuring these pupils progress at the same satisfactory rate as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' moral and social development is especially strong. Awareness of other cultures is successfully fostered, for example through project work on Indian villages. The school is an ordered community. Pupils behave well, and the vast majority conduct themselves very sensibly. They are polite and welcoming. Pupils support each other well both at play and in lessons. Most have good attitudes to learning and this is shown in the care they take in presenting their work. Pupils enjoy practical work and active methods of learning, but their concentration and enthusiasm sometimes flag when teaching does not directly engage them. Attendance has improved steadily and is now satisfactory. Pupils make good use of the many opportunities for them to take on responsibilities, for example through the school council, as play leaders and as class monitors. Their limited literacy and numeracy skills mean that their preparation for the next stage in their education is no more than satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

When teaching is good, pupils are made clearly aware of the new knowledge and skills they are expected to acquire, and lessons are carefully planned to meet the needs of all pupils. On these occasions, teachers use assessment purposefully to keep a regular check on pupils' understanding and the pace of learning is brisk. Common strengths of the teaching are good relationships and the competent subject knowledge teachers demonstrate. Sometimes, however, there is not enough variety in lesson planning and questioning techniques. In these weaker lessons,

insufficient use is made of assessment, including at the end of lessons, to clarify what pupils have learnt. When this happens, the attention of some pupils is inclined to wander and learning slows. Marking is regular and provides good encouragement for pupils to sustain their efforts, but it is not tied in tightly to the targets pupils have to promote their involvement in their learning. This reduces the opportunities pupils have to contribute directly to their own progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being, and is now starting to support pupils' academic achievement well. It is well planned with an appropriate emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills, especially in literacy. ICT is purposefully linked to pupils' work in other subjects and there are some imaginative links between design and technology and geography; and between art and English. A good example of the latter is the 'Silver' project on the poet Walter de la Mare. These projects offer good opportunities to widen pupils' understanding and encourage them to pursue their learning at home. The school is now focusing more sharply on adapting the curriculum to cater for pupils who require extra help in their learning. There are early signs of positive impact in the improved progress of pupils at risk of underachieving and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Systems to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety are good and procedures are consistently applied which enhance pupils' sense of security. Child protection and other arrangements for safeguarding pupils are in place. Pupils report that bullying and harassment are rare. They feel confident that they can approach any of the staff if they are troubled. There are good links with outside agencies, both informal and formal, several of which have been effectively cultivated by the family support worker. The school works hard to engage parents to support their children's learning. Outcomes are mixed but strategies to improve pupils' attendance are proving increasingly successful. Academic guidance is satisfactory. An improved tracking system is proving its worth in improving the achievement of some pupils. However, the use of pupils' personal targets to accelerate their progress is underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. A positive outlook and a willingness on the part of staff to adapt to change and new responsibilities have been key factors in ensuring that the current discontinuity in leadership has not had a negative impact on the pupils' quality of education. The current arrangements, some of which are of a temporary nature, have been very capably led and managed by the deputy headteacher. Senior leaders have a very clear view of main priorities and this is reflected in the school development plan which charts a precise course for the future of the school. Several middle leaders are new to their posts and as a result, there are some inconsistencies in the current quality of monitoring of teaching and learning within subjects. Lesson observations undertaken by senior leaders are detailed. Pupils are meeting their targets, but the school is in the early stages of raising the bar to make them more challenging. Governance is satisfactory; governors support the work of the school effectively.

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?	3
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	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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 Bedford Drive Primary School, Birkenhead, CH42 6RT

I am writing to thank you for your help when my colleagues and I visited your school recently and to tell you about our inspection findings. Yours is a satisfactory school. It makes sure your personal development is good. You told us how much you enjoyed activities such as sport. You also pointed out that the staff were very fair in the way they insisted on good behaviour and the little things they did to encourage this. As a result, you feel safe and happy at school.

We judge that the children in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start in their learning and make good progress. Pupils in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 make satisfactory progress, but there are some differences in the development of your skills between subjects. You do well in science, because you learn how to apply investigative skills carefully, but you are less sure in mathematics, for example while trying to do mental calculations. The staff are looking more sharply at supporting the pupils who need extra help with their work and their efforts are starting to pay off as these pupils are now making the progress they need to keep up with the others.

The standards of pupils in Year 6 have steadily improved in the last few years, but you have still some way to go to catch up with pupils of your age in other primary schools. We have asked the acting headteacher and her staff to concentrate on three things. The first is to work to close this gap, especially in mathematics. The second is to ensure that the teaching is consistently good in all lessons. Finally, we have asked them to make smarter use of targets to get you more involved in improving your work.

It may be a coincidence, but the rise in standards I mentioned above has happened at the same time as your attendance has improved. Keep this up!