

Beechwood Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111175
Local Authority	Halton
Inspection number	310525
Inspection date	18 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Judith Tolley

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	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	106
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Knights
Headteacher	Mrs Lynne Finn
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2005
School address	Grasmere Drive Beechwood Runcorn Cheshire WA7 2TT
Telephone number	01928 560479
Fax number	01928 574813

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, personal development and well-being, teaching and learning, care, guidance and support, and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own records, policies and observation of the school at work, discussions with staff and children, and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but there is no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Beechwood Primary School is much smaller than average and is situated within the borough of Halton, an area of high social and economic deprivation. Children are of predominantly White British heritage. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is high. The school has the Artsmark, Activemark, Healthy Schools status, Primary Quality Mark and the Thinking School Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Beechwood Primary School provides an outstanding quality of education. Its identity as a 'Thinking School' is at the heart of its work, whether it is encouraging children to think about others or to think things out for themselves. Children's personal development is excellent. They take pride in their school and have excellent relationships with each other, with their teachers and with other adults. Their behaviour is exemplary. Learning is exciting and fun. Children are very proud of their achievement and during their time in the school they develop a real love of learning. They say that one of the things they really like about the school is the school motto, 'Think for yourself, care for others', which they feel is what they are encouraged to do every day. They particularly enjoy exploring ideas for themselves and sharing their ideas with others. They express their opinions confidently. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They value the wide range of opportunities they have, for instance, as school council representatives, as playground leaders and as buddies for younger children, to take responsibility and make decisions. They are also proud of what they have done to help a school in Kenya and to develop a Travel Plan for their own school. The quality of the care and guidance they receive is excellent. Adults in the school know the children in their care very well indeed. The progress of individuals, including children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is closely tracked and appropriate targets set. These targets are clearly understood by the children and they talk in detail about how they are doing and what they need to do to improve. They make sensible choices about healthy living. The school follows government guidelines to ensure children's safety and the safe recruitment of staff. Attendance is above average and further reflects children's enjoyment of school.

Throughout the school, children's achievement is outstanding. They join the school with attainment which is below expectations for their age. A high proportion of children also have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. By the end of Year 6, children attain above average standards in science, mathematics and English. In the Year 2 teacher assessments in 2007, standards were below average in mathematics, writing and reading. However, in work seen during the inspection, standards in this cohort of children are average. Action taken by the school to raise standards, particularly in writing, has been very successful. Children write confidently and to a high standard. All of this represents excellent achievement in relation to children's starting points.

The quality of teaching and learning is excellent. Teachers present ideas clearly in a way that immediately engages children's interest. Expectations are high and children are routinely given the opportunity to explore ideas for themselves, plan and carry out investigations and discuss their ideas with others. As a result, they learn very effectively from others and through practical experience. Teachers and teaching assistants use questioning very well to guide children in their discussions, and by the time they leave the school, children are very effective, independent learners. Assessment information is used very effectively to meet children's individual needs in lessons and to ensure they all make the same excellent progress. Teachers and teaching assistants provide very good support for lower attaining children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they are able to participate fully in whole-class activities. Higher attaining children are also very effectively challenged to reach their potential.

The curriculum is based firmly on the notion that children learn most effectively by exploring and thinking things out for themselves. Children are encouraged to learn through play and to talk about their experiences both with adults and with each other. They learn very effectively

through solving problems and carrying out investigations, whether this is in the classroom, playing outside in the playground, listening to stories in the 'dell', pond dipping, or observation or through their topic work. Children particularly look forward to the 'Excellence Weeks' at the end of each half term where they can work in teams and with children from different year groups to investigate ideas in depth. The curriculum is enriched by the opportunity to learn French and a wide range of extra-curricular activities and visits. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to support and extend learning.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher provides very clear direction and a distinctive philosophy focused firmly upon the needs of individual children. She is very strongly supported by the deputy headteacher, and indeed by all staff. Teachers and other adults work very effectively as a team. All staff are fully involved in the school's self-evaluation and in improvement planning processes. These are based upon the close monitoring of children's progress. The school sets itself challenging targets, is successful in meeting them, and is continually striving to improve standards further. Standards in English and mathematics have improved significantly over the last three years and there has been excellent improvement since the last inspection. The school works very effectively with other institutions, outside agencies and with parents and carers, to ensure all children can achieve their best. The school frequently provides workshops for parents which enable them to support their children themselves and to understand the work the school does. Plans are also in place for children from the school to act as Learning Leaders at the High School to explain how they learn most effectively. Governors provide very strong support, are very well informed and act very effectively as critical friends. The school provides excellent value for money and has an excellent capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children get off to an excellent start in the Foundation Stage. Teachers plan creative and interesting activities very carefully to meet the different needs of individual children. This detailed and sensitive planning leads to rapid learning in an exciting atmosphere. When they join the school, children's skills are below those typical for their age and, for many, their social and communication skills are particularly weak. Strategies used to improve these skills are very effective and are the focus of all activities. Every opportunity is taken to engage children in discussion and they learn to enjoy reading from the outset. As a result, children make excellent progress, particularly in their personal development and in speaking and listening. They enter Year 1 confident, articulate and with a love of learning.

Assessment procedures in the Foundation Stage are outstanding. The process of setting targets is clearly focused upon the needs of each child. Close checks on progress celebrate milestones reached by individuals and ensure a very smooth transition from one class to the next. As a result, most achieve the expected learning goals for their age by the start of Year 1. The environment is stimulating, calm and orderly. Children have excellent relationships with each other and their teachers and are keen to learn and behave well. They treat each other kindly and enjoy participating in group activities. Their welfare is promoted very well, based on very good links with parents and very strong leadership and management.

What the school should do to improve further

There are no significant areas for improvement. The school is very much aware of what it needs to do to improve further and plans are already in place to achieve this.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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 Beechwood Primary School, Runcorn, WA7 2TT

I would like to thank you all for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. I thoroughly enjoyed talking to you and hearing your views. I noticed how well you behave and how well you look after each other. You play an important role in improving your school. I was very impressed by what you have done to help the school in Kenya and by the Travel Plan you have drawn up for your own school.

I am sure you will be interested, but not at all surprised, to know that your school is an outstanding one. You are very well looked after. The teachers have been working hard to help you improve your writing recently and this has been very successful. Teaching is excellent and helps you to achieve your best. You told me how much you enjoy your lessons and it was easy to see why. Teachers work very hard to provide lots of exciting activities for you so that you can explore ideas for yourselves, not only in the classroom but also outside in the 'dell' and through the 'Excellence weeks'. You told me how much you enjoyed these activities and how much they helped you to learn.

I was particularly impressed by how well you worked together in pairs and small groups to explore ideas for yourselves in lessons and I understand that some of you are going to go to the High School to tell them how you do it. I hope it goes well. Younger children in the Reception class also make excellent progress because they, too, are encouraged to explore things for themselves and to discuss their ideas with each other.

I hope you continue to enjoy your learning. I wish you every success in the future.