

# Phoenix Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	133702
<b>Local Authority</b>	Liverpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	316201
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Arthur Markham

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	189
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Terry Sweeney
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Chris Muscatelli
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 June 2004
<b>School address</b>	Birchfield Road Liverpool L7 9LY
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 228 3831
<b>Fax number</b>	0151 475 2705

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This smaller than average sized combined primary school and special educational needs assessment unit serves an area with a high degree of social disadvantage. More than half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above that in most schools. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average and an above average number of pupils are in the early stages of learning English. An extremely high proportion of pupils join and leave the school throughout the year including a small number from refugee/asylum seeker families. The school has Healthy School status and has achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Sports Activemark and the Liverpool Inclusion Award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education. Some aspects of its work are good, notably the rich and stimulating curriculum and the good quality of care and support provided for pupils, which underpin pupils' good personal development and well-being. Links with parents are good and parents rate the school highly. Statements such as, 'I'm very pleased with the education my child is getting' and 'I'm happy with my child's progress and feel safe in the knowledge that this is down to great teaching and a safe and happy environment', typify their views.

Achievement is satisfactory. From low starting points when they join in Year 1 pupils make satisfactory progress. Standards by Year 2 are significantly below average and by Year 6 are well below average. However, the extremely high numbers of pupils who join and leave the school throughout the school year adversely affects standards. In addition, numbers in each class are relatively small and all classes include a few pupils who are integrated from the assessment centre. These pupils, although their achievement is satisfactory, have low skill levels that impact on the overall picture of standards. Many pupils start school with little English and when their arrival is late in the school year this too adversely affects standards. However, because of the generally well targeted support they receive their achievement is satisfactory. Staff work hard to overcome these challenges. They successfully stimulate pupils to want to learn by making the curriculum relevant and interesting. Good use of teaching assistants, overall, enables close attention to be given to meeting the diverse needs of all pupils and ensuring equality of opportunity. The school is working in close partnership with the local authority to improve standards and there is a clear awareness of the need to accelerate pupils' progress in learning. In 2007 there was an improvement in English test results at Year 6. This was due to the school's focus on improving pupils' writing skills. As a result of greater challenge in the school's targets, science results also improved, but this was not the case in mathematics. An examination of school tracking data and pupils' work indicates pupils' progress is accelerating and standards are improving, but they are still not high enough.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, and some teaching is outstanding. Careful financial management has enabled a high number of teaching assistants to be employed. They are mostly well deployed and, as a result, teaching and learning is often good when small-group work takes place. However, there is some variation across the school. Some lessons do not move at a fast enough pace to stimulate pupils and tasks do not always match pupils' needs well enough, as a result learning slows. Learning targets are set in English and these help pupils to understand how they can improve their work. However, learning targets are not yet well developed in other subjects.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides strong educational direction for the school. All staff and governors are working hard to improve the satisfactory education the school currently offers. There is a strong team approach evident in the school. The headteacher has introduced a number of systems to support the raising of standards, for example the recent emphasis on improving writing skills and a focus on investigation and experimentation in science. A number of initiatives have been implemented and these are helping to improve pupils' attendance. Self-evaluation is accurate and correctly identifies the school's current strengths and weaknesses. The use of performance data and its analysis in order to closely monitor pupils' performance and raise achievement is not yet fully developed. Nevertheless,

taking the strengths in leadership and impact of initiatives so far on improving standards, the school has good capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. It is well led and managed with staff working well together to ensure that children make a good start to their learning. Parents are pleased at the way staff involve them in their children's learning. 'The teachers really listen to the children and genuinely support families, typifying the views of parents. Induction arrangements are well organised and children from the Foundation Stage assessment unit are effectively integrated. Good teaching and a rich curriculum present a wide range of activities to children. Assessment procedures are well organised. There is a well balanced programme of teacher-directed and independent learning opportunities, although occasionally more adult involvement in activities could enhance children's learning further. Close attention is given to all areas of learning, with a particularly strong emphasis placed on children's personal, social and emotional development in order that they develop good learning habits. Relationships are very good and children enjoy their learning. They move enthusiastically to their activities, relate well to each other when working in pairs, and show good independent skills, for example quickly putting on their aprons when working in the art area. The well planned and resourced outside area enables learning to continue outdoors effectively. Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes and achieve well from their very low starting points, but by the time they enter Year 1 standards are low compared to the national expectation.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science throughout the school.
- Improve teaching and learning so that it is at least good in all classes, enabling pupils to achieve as well as they can.
- Extend the use of learning targets so that pupils know how to improve their work in subjects other than English.
- Improve the use of and analysis of performance data to raise standards and 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**

When they enter Year 1, as a result of the difficulties in learning faced by many pupils, most have low-level skills that mean they are not ready for the national curriculum. This impacts on standards. Although they make satisfactory progress, by the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are significantly below national averages and have been over the last five years. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2, but, by the end of Year 6, standards are still well below average overall. The recent focus on improving pupils' writing skills and the setting of challenging targets is having a good impact and is reflected in the improved standards in English and science reached by pupils in the 2007 national tests. The school has recognised that standards in mathematics did not improve mainly because of the difficulties pupils experienced with calculation and is taking steps to address this. School data and pupils' work indicate that pupils' current rate of progress is accelerating and standards are

improving. The good support given to those pupils with additional learning needs and those from the wide range of different ethnic groups is also resulting in their progress accelerating.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The school's warm and friendly atmosphere, with pupils and staff showing care and concern for each other, is a major reason why pupils enjoy attending this school. Pupils say that teachers are friendly and, as a result, they respond by behaving well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are pleased that they are given opportunities to express their views through the school council and school parliament. At lunchtime some act as play buddies in the playground and there is no shortage of volunteers to help care for younger more vulnerable children. Pupils develop a good understanding of different cultures, faiths and traditions through lessons and assemblies. They work together well in pairs and groups and show good interpersonal skills. Healthy eating is an established feature of the school and pupils, consequently, have a good understanding of the need for healthy lifestyles. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage in their schooling. Historically, attendance has been well below the national average, but it is improving as a result of a number of school initiatives.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning is not consistent and, as a result, pupils' progress is satisfactory. Teachers plan their lessons well. The best lessons proceed at a good pace with activities that challenge and stimulate pupils. Good use of interactive whiteboards, well targeted questions and clear explanations ensure that pupils understand what they have to do. Pupils respond to questions enthusiastically, clearly enjoy their learning and behave well. As a result, the atmosphere in classrooms is quiet and industrious and learning is good. A large team of teaching assistants enables the creation of small groups and class sizes so that those pupils with additional learning needs and the many learning English as an additional language are generally supported well. Less successful lessons result when the pace is slow and insufficient attention is given to targeting the support to meet the needs of small groups of pupils to boost their learning. Teachers' effectively monitor pupils' work and assess pupils' understanding and as they circulate in lessons. Their involvement of pupils in assessing themselves so that they can determine how well they have understood what they have to learn is less well developed.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The rich curriculum successfully generates an enthusiasm for learning in pupils and promotes their personal and social development well. The needs of all learners, but particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are met well. Close attention is given to the basic skills and other subjects are given satisfactory attention, although the linking of these subjects is at an early stage of development. Lessons in French and philosophy enrich pupils' learning experiences. Educational visits and visitors make learning more exciting and promote pupils' self-confidence and esteem. Pupils' good awareness of the need for healthy lifestyles is reflected in the school's achievement of the Healthy Schools Award and Activemark. Their interpersonal

skills are developed well through a range of strategies in lessons and enhanced through a residential visit to North Wales for pupils in Key Stage 2. A wide range of visitors and visits extends pupils' experiences. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the diverse range of extra-curricular clubs presented to them, to which parents and carers are also invited.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Staff work well with parents, carers and a wide range of agencies to provide high quality pastoral support that supports pupils' personal development well. Parents value this highly and say they find staff very approachable. Pupils say they are confident there is someone they can turn to for support if they have any concerns. Child protection procedures are secure and regular health and safety checks are carried out. Provision for children with additional learning needs, particularly those with severe, profound or complex needs, is good and a much valued and integral aspect of this school. Arrangements for the induction of children into the Foundation Stage are good and Year 6 pupils are well prepared for their transfer to secondary school. Academic guidance is not as strong. Although when teachers' mark work it gives pupils good guidance as to how they can improve, the use of learning targets is not consistent. While clear targets are set in English, the process is not yet well used in mathematics and science.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher leads the school well and is effectively supported by the deputy headteacher. There is a strong team approach, with all staff demonstrating a clear determination to improve the performance of the school. Core subject coordinators have been given time to monitor lessons. Training has been given to staff in the use of strategies such as 'talking partners'. Good links with outside agencies and initiatives in particular the local authority's Intensive Support Programme, are being used effectively. Extra support staff have been employed to enable pupils to be taught in smaller groups. Monitoring and evaluation procedures accurately identify the school's strengths and areas requiring development. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored, although the analysis of the information from this is not used well enough to raise achievement. Nevertheless, intervention strategies, such as additional literacy sessions and small group sessions in mathematics, are well organised so that the many diverse needs of pupils can be met. This concerted effort to raise the quality of teaching and learning is a major factor in the improving rate of progress being made by pupils. Parents rate the school highly, are very appreciative of the way the school involves them in their children's learning, and are pleased at the progress their children make. 'The headteacher and all his staff are second to none and are very approachable', typifies the views of parents. Governors support and challenge the school well. They have a clear view of the school's strengths and areas needing development.

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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?	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	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
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	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	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?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	3
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	3
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 Phoenix Primary School, Liverpool, L7 9LY

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and getting your views. It was a pleasure to hear how much you like your teachers and enjoy school. Phoenix Primary School is providing you with a satisfactory education, but it is improving.

The staff work hard to make sure that you are given lots of interesting things to do so that you really do enjoy school. Your teachers take good care of you and it was pleasing to hear that you feel safe and secure in school. We were delighted at the way you become progressively more mature as you progress through the school and were very impressed at your good behaviour. It was also pleasing to hear how much you enjoy the clubs and activities that are you are able to take part in. You all have a good understanding of the need to eat a healthy diet and to exercise regularly and are clearly very proud of the fact that the school has achieved the Activemark and Healthy School Award.

During your time at school your achievement and progress are satisfactory. However, the standards you reach by the end of Year 6 are well below average. Your headteacher and all the teachers are keen to make sure that you all achieve as well as you can. We have asked the governors and staff to do everything they can to help you reach higher standards in English, mathematics and science. To support this we have asked them to ensure that you learn as well as you can in all your lessons. We were pleased to hear that you know your targets in English and have asked them to make sure that you are also set targets in mathematics and science so that you know what you must do to improve your work. We have also asked the governors and staff to closely examine how well you are doing and identify any areas that need to be improved. You can help by continuing to work as hard as you were doing in the lessons we observed.

Thank you for helping us so much with the inspection of your school. You are lucky to go to such a warm and friendly school. We wish you well and good luck for the future.