

Black Horse Hill Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105032
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	317660
Inspection dates	4–5 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael McIlroy HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	194
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S Crowden
Headteacher	Mr Harry Kennedy
Date of previous school inspection	23 November 2005
School address	Saughall Massie Road West Kirby Wirral Merseyside CH48 6DR
Telephone number	0151 6258446
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The school is smaller than most schools and serves an area of average prosperity. Most pupils are White British and few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average as is the percentage of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Several pupils have a statement of special educational need. The school holds a number of awards, including the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Activemark. When the school was inspected in November 2005 it was judged to require special measures.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. It is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The school considers that its overall effectiveness is satisfactory and inspectors agree with this view.

The inspection of November 2005 required the school to raise pupils' achievement, improve the use of assessment, raise the expectations of staff and pupils of what learners could achieve and improve opportunities for problem-solving in mathematics. Good progress has been made overall on these issues since the last inspection. Since 2005, standards have risen and are now well above average. Results have risen most notably in science and in mathematics. English results have also risen but there are weaknesses in pupils' writing. Pupils enter the school having achieved well above average standards in Key Stage 1. As a result of the improvements made in the school, they now leave with well above average results. Consequently, the progress pupils make in their learning during their time at the school has improved and is now satisfactory.

Key to this improvement in pupils' achievement has been the good progress made by the school in developing and greatly strengthening assessment. Improved procedures for tracking learners' progress have given the school a clear picture of how pupils in each year group are performing. This has allowed teachers to understand better the progress pupils must make from one year to the next. It has also enabled the school to identify and target successfully underachievement. Improved assessment information has also enabled the school to set appropriately challenging targets for all pupils.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There has been an increase in the proportion of good teaching since the last visit by inspectors to monitor the school's progress. More pupils are given challenging work, but this is not always demanding enough. Additional adults are well used to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. Good progress has also been made in developing pupil's mathematical problem-solving skills and in applying these skills in this and other subjects. The curriculum is satisfactory and its appropriate focus on the core subjects has contributed to the rise in standards.

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher, ably supported by the senior leadership team, has provided purposeful and clear direction for the school's improvement. He has ensured that the school has remained focused on the need to improve pupils' achievement. Weaknesses in teaching have been tackled, the monitoring role of senior leaders has been strengthened and staff expectations of what learners can achieve have been raised. However, the school is aware that leadership of foundation subjects is underdeveloped.

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good as is evidenced by their good behaviour and good attendance. Pupils know how to stay safe and healthy. The care, guidance and support which pupils receive are satisfactory. The academic guidance which pupils receive is inconsistent. Not all pupils know the national curriculum levels they are working at and marking does not always give pupils sufficient guidance on how to improve their work. Governance is good. Governors offer both support and challenge to the school. Parents are supportive of the school's work and the school ascertains their views through questionnaires.

The school is not complacent about the recent improvements in standards and pupils' progress and is rightly seeking to build further on these. Given the strengthening of the senior

management team, the school's focus on raising achievement and the trend of improving standards, the school has good capacity to improve and is well placed to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching.
- Share existing good practice to improve the academic guidance pupils receive.
- Develop the role of subject coordinators.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Since the inspection in 2005, standards have risen strongly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In 2006, results improved, although those in English dipped slightly. This overall improvement was sustained in 2007: provisional school data show that in the most recent national assessments, results improved in all three subjects. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected Level 4 in English rose and is above average. Strong improvement in mathematics and science led to attainment which was well above average. Over half of the year group achieved the higher Level 5 in mathematics and two thirds achieved this level in science. Assessment data and inspection evidence indicate that the progress being made by pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, has improved and is now satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Attendance and behaviour of pupils are good. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and show a good awareness of the importance of healthy eating. One group of pupils talked enthusiastically and knowledgeably about the school's gardening patch where vegetables are grown by pupils for use in the school kitchen. Pupils show strong awareness of how to stay safe when cycling to school. They feel safe and know who to turn to if they have any concerns. Pupils' reported that any bullying is dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff. Learners make a satisfactory contribution to their local community and there are a number of opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility in school as play leaders and as school councillors. Above average standards in numeracy and literacy and good opportunities for cooperation and team-working, mean that pupils are well prepared for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall and some of it is good. Good relationships exist between staff and pupils. Lesson planning is based on what pupils have learnt previously and there is a greater match of work to pupils' abilities. Teaching assistants are used well to support less able learners and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Resources, such as interactive whiteboards, are used effectively to make lessons interesting and stimulating. Teachers maximise opportunities for collaboration and discussions between pupils. However, the level of challenge is not always high enough and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to explain and

justify their answers and their reasoning. The quality of marking is inconsistent. In the best examples, there is good dialogue between learners and teachers and pupils are given a clear idea of what it is they have to do to improve. However, too much marking is not precise enough and does not give pupils sufficient guidance on the next steps they should take. Pupils enjoy lessons and work well together when asked to do so. Pupils are encouraged to use a number of methods to assess their own work, although some of these are not fully embedded.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school judges the curriculum to be to be satisfactory and inspectors agree. The curriculum is broad and balanced and there is an appropriate focus on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. However, opportunities for extended writing in other subjects are not always fully exploited. Provision for information and communication technology is satisfactory. There is good provision for physical education as pupils receive two hours of this each week. Recently, additional provision has been made to develop pupils' reading skills. Improvements in teaching have resulted in greater opportunities for the more able pupils to make progress in their learning. Learning is supported by an appropriate level of homework. Pupils benefit from enrichment activities such as educational visits and a good range of extra-curricular clubs such as choir, gardening club and sporting activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support for pupils are satisfactory. Supervision for pupils around the school is satisfactory. Child protection procedures are robust. Pupils receive appropriate guidance about growing up and about how to keep safe. Arrangements for receiving new pupils into the school are effective and good guidance is provided for those transferring to secondary school. The school provides good care and support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which contributes to satisfactory progress in their learning. Improved assessment procedures mean that pupils are more closely involved in checking the progress they have made in their work. However, there are some inconsistencies in the academic guidance pupils receive.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's assessment that leadership and management is satisfactory. The headteacher has provided clear and purposeful direction for the school and has succeeded in securing a satisfactory quality of education for learners. Overall, the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been addressed well. The headteacher has ensured that the school is focused on improving standards and the progress made by pupils. Expectations of what pupils can achieve, including the more able, have been raised amongst staff, partly through the good use of challenging targets which are appropriately linked to performance management procedures. The improvement of assessment and tracking procedures, led by the assessment coordinator, have given the school a much sharper understanding of the performance and progress made by each year group and each pupil. In turn, this has enabled the school to identify underperformance more rapidly and to target it with appropriate strategies, such as the Additional Literacy Support.

Weaknesses in teaching have been addressed and the proportion of good teaching has risen. Opportunities have been created for staff to observe good teaching in other schools and to share the lessons learnt. The enthusiastic participation of staff in a national improvement strategy and a more rigorous approach by senior leaders to the monitoring of the school's work have also contributed to this. The school's self-evaluation of its effectiveness is realistic and broadly accurate. The school improvement plan is appropriately focused on improving the achievement of pupils. The coordinator for special educational needs has provided sound leadership for this area of the school's work so that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. Subject leadership is satisfactory overall. The school is aware that leadership in the foundation subjects is underdeveloped.

Links with parents have been strengthened, for example, through the recent workshop on how pupils learn. Effective links with local secondary schools are used well to provide opportunities to extend pupils' learning. Governance is good. Governors are kept well informed of the school's work and provide both challenge and support. Finances are carefully administered. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	3
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	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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	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	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	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 Black Horse Hill Junior School, West Kirby, Wirral, CH48 6DR

Congratulations! Two years ago, your school was asked to make major improvements in its work and was placed in 'special measures'. We asked the school to give you more opportunities to do problem-solving in mathematics, improve how it checks up on how well you are doing and to help all of you to learn more. The staff at your school have worked hard and have made improvements in these areas. You are now learning and achieving more. The school has now been taken out of 'special measures.' I would also like to thank you for being so polite and helpful when we visited. As well as the improvements made by the school some of the best things which we saw during our visit were that:

- you are well behaved in class and around the school
- your attendance is good
- you know how to keep healthy and safe
- you have more opportunities to do problem-solving activities in mathematics
- you receive a suitable amount of homework
- you have a good range of clubs to take part in, such as the choir and the gardening club.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to make some changes to make the school even better. These are:

- to help you to get better at writing
- to make all teaching good
- to make sure that all of you know what level you are working at and to make marking better so that you know what you must do to improve your work
- to enable teachers who are in charge of subjects to develop a better understanding of what they need to do to improve their subjects.

Once again, congratulations and thank you for all your politeness and help during our visit.