

# Mersey Park Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105042
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wirral
<b>Inspection number</b>	324146
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael McIlroy HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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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 (total)	424
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Brian Kenny
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Cartwright
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 October 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	12 September 2006
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Elm Road Higher Tranmere Birkenhead Merseyside CH42 0PH
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 6478197
<b>Fax number</b>	0151 6501021

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Mersey Park is an above average sized primary school which serves an area which experiences levels of deprivation that are three times the average. Most pupils are of White British heritage and very few pupils speak English as an additional language. Half the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is three times the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above that found nationally.

The school holds the Healthy Schools Award and the Sports Active Award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school with a number of outstanding features. Its chief strengths lie in the exceptional care and support which it provides for its pupils.

Pupils receive a good start to their education in the effective and well-led Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). They enter the school with abilities and skills well below those normally expected for children of their age and when they leave Year 6 they have attained average standards. This represents good overall progress in their learning. A key reason for this success is the school's strong commitment to doing its best for all pupils. The school's welcoming and inclusive ethos, its focus on raising standards and the excellent care and support that learners receive ensure that all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress. Standards in Key Stage 2 have risen steadily over a number of years and, despite a recent dip, are average. However, standards in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1 are well below average. This partly due to pupils' low starting point and some previous discontinuity in staffing, and could be higher.

The very good care provided for pupils enables them to feel very safe and secure in school and creates a positive climate for learning. This is characterised by a comment made by staff who said, 'the pupils are part of one big family at our school.' The school's excellent support for pupils, such as that provided by additional adults and external agencies, ensures that all groups of pupils, including vulnerable learners, are helped to succeed. A further reason for the good progress pupils make is good teaching. Fast-paced and often imaginative, it is securely based on the positive relationships that exist between learners and staff. Pupils' personal development and well-being is also good. Pupils' are well behaved. They have good attitudes to learning and appreciate the good academic guidance that they receive. They enjoy school, partly because of major improvements to the curriculum, which is now good. Focused appropriately on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, it also encourages creativity in lessons to capture pupils' interest. Pupils know how to stay safe and keep healthy. They make a good contribution to both their school and local community. Attendance, however, is below average and some pupils' absence has had an adverse impact on standards.

The school is well led and managed. The recently strengthened leadership team provides clear direction for the school and is focused on improving provision, raising standards and maintaining its inclusive ethos, wherein all pupils thrive. The good team spirit amongst staff has enabled a significant number of new teachers to settle quickly and effectively into their roles. Most parents who returned questionnaires support the work of the school. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are supportive of the school, but are not sufficiently well informed about its work in order to act effectively as its critical friend.

In light of the strengthened leadership team, improvements since the last inspection and the upward trend in standards in Key Stage 2, the school has good capacity to improve. It provides good value for money.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Parents appreciate how quickly their children settle into the Nursery and say they feel welcomed and encouraged as partners in their children's learning. They agree that children get a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes. Parents are pleased with the provision, which meets

the statutory requirements for EYFS. Children start in Nursery with a wide range of skills, although many have skills that are well below those considered typical for children of their age. By the end of the Reception Year, the majority reach, and some exceed, the expected early learning goals. However, a significant minority are still working towards these. Good teaching speeds up children's learning, particularly in their personal and social development. Progress in their speaking and listening skills is also good due to teachers' careful assessments and the good range of activities provided. This has a positive impact on children's learning and their communication skills. They confidently try new things and have 'a go' at reading, writing and counting. As a result, every child makes good or better progress in all of the areas of their learning. The children are happy, friendly and quite obviously secure and confident. They enjoy sharing their learning with visitors. Good teamwork among the adults and effective care systems ensure that children's welfare and progress is a priority. The EYFS is led and managed well. Space and resources are used well, promoting good learning and independence. Good use is made of a shared area for outside learning while children wait for building work on their own separate play space to be completed.

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

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1.
- Improve attendance.
- Improve governance so that governors can hold the school more effectively to account for its work.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enter the school with levels of skills and knowledge that in many cases are well below what is expected for children of their age. When they leave, they have attained standards that are broadly average and have, therefore, made good progress overall. Although the progress made by pupils in Key Stage 1 has been weaker in the past, recent changes to staffing mean that pupils are now starting to achieve well. In Key Stage 2, pupils also achieve well and some make very good progress. All groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those entitled to free school meals make good progress in their learning.

Standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 1 have been well below average for a number of years, partly due to pupils' low starting point and some prolonged discontinuity in staffing. In 2007, the last year for which validated national assessment results are available, pupils performed least well in writing and most strongly in mathematics. Provisional data provided by the school from the most recent assessments indicate that standards remain well below average, although there has been some improvement in reading and writing. In Key Stage 2, standards are average overall. Results in the core subjects improved steadily over a period of five years until 2007, when they were just above average. Provisional results from the most recent end of Key Stage 2 national tests, suggest that standards have dipped slightly due to weaknesses in the year group and some pupils' absence. Nonetheless, standards remain broadly in line with national averages.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They treat adults, each other and their environment with respect. They know right from wrong and the good behaviour that

they display in and around school stems from this. This is also helped by the 'zone system' used by staff to improve behaviour. Pupils feel safe in school and have a good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy. Many make healthy choices in the food they eat and the exercise they take at playtimes and in school clubs. Most pupils enjoy coming to school. However, attendance is no better than satisfactory. Despite a number of initiatives designed to improve attendance, it remains below average. Pupils make a good contribution to their school community by taking up positions of responsibility such as team captains and class monitors. The elected school council has made a significant contribution to school life. Its suggestions for improving the lunchtime food and the pupils' toilets have been followed. Pupils are aware they are part of a wider community and a number of local and international charities benefit from their generosity. They learn to work well together. Older pupils participate in 'enterprise schemes' that introduce them to the world of business, encourage them to improve their skills and to work effectively as members of a team. This prepares them well for their future lives.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that the quality of teaching and learning is good. Relationships between staff and learners are good in lessons, and combined with teachers' high expectations, this results in good behaviour being a feature of all classes. Pupils feel confident to approach staff, if they are stuck or unsure. Pupils' enjoyment of their lessons is clear. This is brought about by the element of fun teachers bring to learning and the brisk pace of lessons which pupils find challenging. A typical comment being, 'Teachers try to make learning as fun as they can to help you remember.' Teaching assistants are used very effectively to support learning. Information and communication technology (ICT) is well used to stimulate learning. In one imaginative Year 6 lesson, it was well used to show a tour guide film to pupils to introduce them to their new topic on Mexico. Pupils have opportunities to work together which improve their confidence. Strategies to help pupils assess the quality of their work are used well in many lessons. These also enable pupils to check their learning and staff to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. Work is marked regularly and pupils receive positive written or oral feedback about how well they have done. The useful marking system which indicates the 'way forward' for pupils in their learning, which was introduced into the teaching of writing, is now spreading to other subjects.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

School leaders have taken effective steps to improve the curriculum and it is now good. It is appropriately focused on the core subjects and the quality of teaching and younger pupils' learning of basic literacy skills is better than at the time of the last inspection. This enables teachers to give pupils wider and more enjoyable learning opportunities in subjects such as history and geography. There is a strong emphasis on learning about other countries and cultures, which is enriched by 'theme weeks.' In turn, this has improved the curriculum's relevance and interest for pupils. Pupils use the skills they have learned in English, mathematics and ICT lessons well in other subjects. However, the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy skills within other subjects are not yet fully embedded. Older pupils say how much they enjoy learning French and Spanish. There is a good range of well-attended sports and arts activities, such as dancing, football, basketball and fitness clubs. Wider opportunities, such as visitors,

dramatic performances and educational trips, including the popular residential visit for Year 6 pupils to Barnstondale, further enrich the curriculum. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have full access to learning opportunities, which is a further improvement since the last inspection.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The care and support provided for pupils are outstanding. Consequently, pupils feel very safe and secure in school. All staff are committed to this high quality of care. This was illustrated by a comment, 'The children are our priority'. As a result, pupils are confident that they can turn to staff for help whenever they have a worry or difficulty. Vulnerable pupils are able to select a member of staff as a 'buddy' to contact if they feel, at any time, in need of help or support. There are a great many links with outside agencies, which provide excellent support for pupils with particular needs. A very effective and committed group of skilled teaching assistants provides high quality support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and other vulnerable pupils. This excellent support helps these pupils to achieve well. Academic guidance is good. Pupils' progress is tracked regularly and carefully and this information is used well. They are given challenging targets and teachers provide pupils with the next steps in learning they need to take to achieve them.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher, ably assisted by the deputy headteacher, provides strong leadership and clear direction for the school. The leadership team has been reorganised and strengthened by recent appointments. Expectations of pupils and staff are high and a good team spirit exists in the school. The school's work is checked regularly by senior leaders and feedback on areas for improvement is shared with staff. Weaknesses in teaching are addressed. Rigorous performance management arrangements are linked appropriately to improving standards. Good procedures to track pupils' progress are used effectively to hold teachers to account. Middle managers are effective. Effective leadership by the coordinators for special educational needs ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Other managers check on pupils' work and thus have a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses of their curriculum areas.

Areas for improvement, identified at the last inspection, have been successfully tackled. Other useful initiatives such as teaching older pupils in small groups for mathematics have contributed to the general rising trend in standards at Key Stage 2. In 2007 and 2008, the school met most of its challenging targets. These are used well by senior leaders to drive improvement and ensure that all groups of pupils make equally good progress.

The school's self-evaluation of its effectiveness, although lacking some detail, is accurate. It is based on regular checks on the school's work and analysis of performance data. The school knows where it needs to improve. It has used this information to introduce initiatives such as the 'All Write Now' strategy designed to improve standards in writing. An evaluated school improvement plan focuses aptly on raising standards and is supported by action plans for different subjects. The positive interaction between staff and pupils, effective inclusion and a

strong curricular focus on learning about global communities mean that the school makes a good contribution to community cohesion.

The views of both pupils and parents are surveyed by the school. Governance is satisfactory. Finances are well administered and governors provide support for the school. However, they are not informed well enough about the school's work to offer it a good degree of challenge.



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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	2

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which 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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## 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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Mersey Park Primary School, Birkenhead, Merseyside, CH42 0PH

Thank you for being so helpful and polite when we inspected your school recently. I am writing to let you know what we found. Your school is a good school with a number of outstanding features. Some of the best things that we saw were:

- the care and support you receive is outstanding
- your behaviour is good
- of you make good progress in your learning
- your school is well led and managed
- you are well taught by your teachers
- the curriculum you follow is good and interesting. You have lots of clubs that you can take part in.

We have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to improve a few things in order to make your school even better. We have asked them to make sure that those of you in Key Stage 1 learn more in reading, writing and mathematics. We have also asked the school to improve your attendance. You can help too, by making sure that all of you come to school every single day. We have also asked that governors find out more about the school's work so that they can help it to improve.

Once again, many thanks for your help and politeness when we visited your school recently.