

# Birkdale Primary School

## Inspection report

---

Unique Reference Number	104860
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	331409
Inspection dates	27–28 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Mark Williams HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

---

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	362
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Linda Cheeseman
Headteacher	Mr Paul Robert Kelly
Date of previous school inspection	February 2006
School address	Matlock Road Birkdale Southport Merseyside PR8 4EL
Telephone number	01704 567516
Fax number	01704 551949
Email address	head.birkdaleprimary@schools.sefton.gov.uk

---

Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	27–28 November 2008
Inspection number	331409

---

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector. The inspectors carried out the following activities: observing teaching in fifteen lessons; holding meetings with two governors, staff, and pupils' councils and with a small group of parents; observing the school's work and looking at pupils' work and a range of documents. They also took into account questionnaires completed by pupils, staff and parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether or not standards attained by pupils; the school's monitoring, evaluation and planning; and the overall quality of provision, including teaching and the curriculum, all self-assessed by the school as outstanding were indeed so
- the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
- the school's capacity for sustained improvement.

## Information about the school

The school serves a mixed residential area within Southport. It is housed in two nineteenth century buildings separated by a small playground. While larger in size than most primary schools in England, it is smaller than schools in the immediate neighbourhood. The school has been successful in attaining a large number of external awards, including Artsmark Gold, the International Schools award and Healthy Schools status. In 2005, the school was awarded 'Lead Creative School' status by Merseyside Creative Partnerships. It works with a variety of partners both locally and nationally.

## Further information about the school

	School's figures	School's figures compared with other schools
School size	362	Above average
Free school meals	13.2%	Average
Proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	11%	Below average
Proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups	2.5%	Below average
Proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language	0%	Below average
Proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	1.7%	Below average

## Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

### Main findings

This is an outstanding school. Pupils are excited by their learning, make at least good progress and achieve high standards in English, mathematics and science. They are given every opportunity to be creative in lessons and other activities that are typified by outstanding teaching. At the heart of the school's success, and its most noted feature, is the exciting curriculum which is rich, varied, highly stimulating and delivers a real 'wow!' factor. The school knows itself well and uses its expertise in partnerships with other schools and institutions to very good effect. Within these strengths, leaders recognise that the outcomes of its monitoring and evaluation should be recorded more regularly and that governors should be more involved in supporting and challenging the school in its work. This would strengthen the school's good capacity for sustained improvement. Nonetheless, the school is led and managed very well and the headteacher and his staff live out their commitment 'to pupils achieving high standards through enjoyment and innovation.'

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

To sustain excellence and build upon the school's existing strengths:

- governors should support and challenge the school's work more rigorously and systematically
- leaders should ensure that the outcomes of the monitoring and evaluation which take place, are recorded regularly.

How well does the school meet the needs of individuals and different groups of pupils?

1

The school's focus on developing pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding across the whole curriculum is very successful. Pupils, by the time they leave Year 6, attain high standards in English, mathematics and science. This represents good progress from broadly average, but variable, starting points. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, too, in this inclusive school. Particularly pleasing has been the improvement in writing since the previous inspection. This is

the direct result of high quality teaching and support for all pupils, plus opportunities for pupils to express themselves creatively in a wide variety of ways through the stimulating curriculum. The quality of writing produced, for example in the style of Shakespeare's *Lady Macbeth*, demonstrates pupils' mature understanding of text and their ability to put themselves into a given character's shoes. In addition, pupils produce high quality art work, for example in the style of Kandinsky and good opportunities exist for musical development. Pupils' progress is particularly marked in Key Stage 2, where it accelerates and is outstanding. Pupils clearly enjoy school very much as demonstrated in their mature, reflective attitudes and their concern for others. Their contribution to the wider community is extensive through, for example, charitable fund raising via 'mufty' (non-uniform) days and work to develop environmental awareness based materials at the Southport ECO centre. Attendance, owing to bouts of illness and some holidays being taken within term time, is average. Behaviour observed during the inspection was exemplary.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	1
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
Pupils' attendance and punctuality	3
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

## The quality of the school's work

The outstanding curriculum is the key feature of the school. It enthuses both staff and pupils alike. Through well thought out links between different areas of the curriculum, teachers and their assistants skilfully bring learning to life. Pupils are taken through the steps of learning very well and are given freedom to put them into action. Such features were seen in the majority of lessons observed during the inspection. In particular, in an outstanding lesson in a Year3/4 class, the teacher expertly built on previous work about space and motivated her pupils to write high quality introductions to a story about stepping out from a spaceship. Highly effective use of lighting and music, along with well-paced discussion of key adjectives and adverbs together with pupils and the teacher walking as if weightless meant, to all intents and purposes, that the pupils were on a different planet! The pupils

<sup>1</sup> Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

responded with glee. A teaching assistant worked separately with a small group of pupils who had been unable to take part in previous lessons. With the same enthusiasm, she encouraged the pupils to build up a battery of words and phrases and created a real sense of anticipation for what was to come. Such learning is typical of the outstanding teaching and curriculum, along with the excellent support, guidance and care. All of this ensures that pupils' skills are nurtured and built upon very effectively in order to develop well-rounded individuals. Such strengths are enhanced by additional high quality activities, such as regular visitors to school, for example puppeteers and grandparents; residential visits for older pupils; and opportunities for music, sport, drama and modern foreign languages. Coupled with pupils' active participation in environmental activities and work with other schools, for example, the Yorkies' (boys' choir) support for another school, it is no surprise pupils achieve so well in their learning. They are extremely thoughtful about what they are doing, demonstrate an excellent awareness of healthy lifestyles and make strong contributions to the wider community.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	1
Effective assessment and academic guidance	1
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	1
Support, guidance and care	1

## How effective are leadership and management?

There are many strengths in leadership and management, not least in the crystal clear direction set by the headteacher that pupils should enjoy as well as achieve. Nonetheless, leaders recognise that some administrative aspects of its overall, high quality systems to check how well the school is doing require greater rigour if the school's good capacity to sustain improvement is to grow. In particular, the committed governing body has not been involved in self-evaluation as fully as it ought. Likewise, although many discussions and evaluations regularly take place between staff, these are not always recorded. As a result, the big picture of what the school does well is very clear. However, areas where refinements are needed, for example, in ensuring that all individual education plans for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have a written review by the target date, are known, but not always written down. Appropriate safeguarding and safety measures such as risk assessments are in place. Despite these aspects, leadership and management are strong as demonstrated by the highly positive outcomes displayed by pupils in their enjoyment, learning, personal development and equally positive community relations and involvement. Staff are clear in their roles with a good number working towards higher qualifications. Almost all parents/carers spoken to during the inspection were highly complimentary about the school.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

Monitoring, evaluating and planning for improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	1
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	3
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	3
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	1
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	1
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	1

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the Nursery or the Reception class with the range of abilities and skills one would expect in such young children. Staff work very well together and with parents/carers and other professionals. As a result, children make an excellent start to life in school. They settle well and quickly get down to enjoying, experiencing and learning through play. They show confidence in themselves and in the school. Relationships with parents are excellent and enhanced by home visits before children begin school. Parents are welcomed not just at the beginning, but throughout their child's time in the EYFS. For example, a 'caring and sharing' session was observed in the Reception class during the inspection, with parents/carers and children alike sitting on the carpet and joining in together.

During their time in the EYFS children make excellent progress. This is because the classes are very well organised and present the children with a wide range of stimulating and challenging activities. Displays in the classrooms, as elsewhere in the school, are stunning. Staff know the children's needs well and act upon them accordingly. Already in the Nursery class children are becoming confident speakers and good listeners. This was evident as they investigated magnetic materials, recalled the story *'Can't You Sleep Little Bear?'* while playing in their own cave and gasped in wonder as ice blocks cracked in the water play area. Children's learning and development are enhanced through additional and unusual features, not least the school's site manager working with Reception children a few at a time to develop woodworking skills. As one parent said, 'the highlight of his school life so far'.

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?*	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?*	1
How effectively is the welfare of the children in the EYFS promoted?*	1
How effectively is the provision in the EYFS led and managed?*	1



\* Common judgements made across all inspections of the EYFS

## Views of parents and carers

Sixty six out of 275 parents/carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. The very large majority of respondents expressed agreement or strong agreement with the questions raised. Two questions received less favourable responses, although the large majority were positive. These were concerned with how well the school keeps parents/carers informed of their child's progress and how well the school deals with any incidents of unacceptable behaviour. As a result, the school is to consider ways of explaining children's targets to parents/carers more clearly. Inspectors also considered the views of parents regarding behaviour and for this reason judged it, in line with the school's self-assessment, to be good, although exemplary behaviour was observed during the inspection.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2006-7, 14% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2006-7, 46% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing for its pupils suitably. In 2006-7, 34% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2006-7, 6% of schools were judged inadequate.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



1 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Birkdale Primary School, Southport, PR8 4EL

Wow! That is the word the other inspector Mr Simm and I used quite a lot when we inspected your school recently. We really enjoyed our two days with you and are writing to thank you for speaking with us and telling us about your school in the pupils' questionnaire. This information told us that you enjoy school and that the staff care for you.

We have judged your school to be outstanding. This is the top grade that inspectors can give. We were most impressed by the curriculum the school provides. We could clearly see that the staff have designed it not just to help you attain high standards, but also so that you enjoy what you do and learn important skills along the way. Teaching is outstanding, too. We saw you really enjoying the lessons we went to and you told us about the exciting things you do outside lessons. It is very impressive that you are able to share your enthusiasm with other schools, the 'Yorkies' helping another school to set up a choir, for example. It is also impressive that your school holds so many awards and is trying to help other schools become as creative as yours.

So what is the result of the outstanding curriculum and outstanding teaching? The answer is the high standards you attain in your learning and your personal development. You not only attain high standards in English, mathematics and science, you learn how to be healthy and how to consider the needs of others very well indeed. In addition, we were very impressed with your behaviour and attitudes during the inspection.

Well done to you all! Well done also to your headteacher, the staff and school community who have worked hard to achieve this success. To help the school improve even further we have asked that the governors support and challenge the school a bit more and that school leaders record the outcomes of their excellent work more often than has been the case in the past.

We wish you every continued success for the future!

Mark Williams  
Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).