

Birkenhead Christ Church CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105064
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	336411
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Diane Auton

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Linda Christian
Headteacher	Mrs Marie Szydłowska
Date of previous school inspection	9 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, and parents and carers. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including data about pupils' progress and attainment, the school's planning documents, policies, procedures and records. They reviewed information provided by parents and carers in the 23 questionnaires that were returned.

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

- the standards reached by pupils and the progress they make
- the effectiveness of teaching and the curriculum in building on pupils' skills from year to year
- the impact of leadership and management on achieving the best possible outcomes for pupils
- how well provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage enables children to progress in their learning and development.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized school. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is greater than that found in most schools. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a very small proportion from other heritages, including a small number of pupils who are learning English as an additional language. Early Years Foundation Stage education is provided in the Nursery and Reception classes. The school has experienced several recent changes in personnel, including three new appointments to the teaching staff this term.

The school is an Investor in People. It also holds the Healthy Schools Award, the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Activemark and the School Travel Plan Award.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

From very low starting points on entry to the Nursery class, most pupils go on to reach the nationally expected level of attainment in all subjects by the end of Key Stage 2. However, the rate of progress is very uneven across the school and, as a result, pupils do not start to achieve well until the final years of Key Stage 2. Attainment is below average by the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils continue to work at levels below the expectations for their age during the first half of Key Stage 2.

After making a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils' progress slows down until the final two years of Key Stage 2, when it starts to accelerate rapidly and attainment rises significantly. This has been a consistent picture for the past three years. The school recognises the need to address underachievement in Key Stage 1 and Years 3 and 4 and a number of actions are currently being taken with this in view. These developments are positive, but are mostly at an early stage and so it is too soon to measure their impact on pupils' attainment and overall rate of progress. However, because teaching has been recently and significantly improved, pupils are now more effective learners across the school. As a result, good learning is a characteristic of most lessons, reflecting the current good overall quality of teaching. There has not been time for these improvements to become evident in sustained good progress over longer periods as seen in performance data. Hence, learning and progress are judged to be satisfactory although pupils' performance in lessons is now good. This good performance is rooted in good teaching and an improved, good-quality curriculum which ensures that pupils are fully engaged in most lessons and have good opportunities to develop basic skills in many subjects.

Pupils behave well and show a good understanding of how and why to adopt healthy lifestyles. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school is caring and inclusive and provides well for pupils who are learning English, those who are vulnerable and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, those pupils make good progress.

The school has established a systematic approach to tracking and reviewing the progress pupils make. This has had the best impact for pupils with additional needs, who are identified accurately and supported well. The school is less effective in identifying any underachievement by more-able pupils. The use of individual learning targets contributes well to the good progress pupils make in Reception and Year 6; this successful strategy is not yet fully developed in the other classes. Work has begun to improve continuity of provision between Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 in order to meet pupils' learning needs more accurately in Key Stage 1. This, too, is still

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at a very early stage. Monitoring systems have been strengthened, and this has helped to ensure that teaching, learning and the curriculum are good. While the school's self-evaluation is accurate in most respects, it does not fully recognise the extent to which more-able pupils may be underachieving. Consequently, the school's capacity for continuing to improve is currently satisfactory, rather than good. The poor attendance of a minority of pupils is an ongoing issue for the school, despite its strenuous efforts to promote and encourage regular attendance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve progress and attainment, particularly in Key Stage 1 and Years 3 and 4, by:
 - ensuring that provision in Key Stage 1 is closely matched to pupils' learning needs
 - rapidly extending current good practice in the use of individual learning targets to all classes
 - using the information gained from tracking pupils' progress to identify any underachievement, and especially of more-able pupils, so that it may be addressed promptly and effectively.
- Improve attendance by further increasing its efforts to implement a full range of strategies to promote regular attendance by a small minority of pupils whose attendance gives cause for concern.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils apply themselves well in lessons and show good concentration skills. They work well with a partner or in groups and in most lessons they are alert and responsive and show interest in learning. Improvements in the quality of teaching are enabling all groups of pupils to become more confident and effective learners. In a minority of lessons, where insufficient challenge is provided for them, more-able pupils do not learn as well as they might. Until very recently, pupils' average attainment has resulted mainly from particularly effective teaching in Years 5 and 6, which led to rapid progress towards the end of pupils' time in the school. Currently, as pupils' learning skills are improving, progress in lessons is speeding up and is now good overall but progress over time remains satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make consistently good progress as they move up through the school. This a consequence of the targeted support given to those pupils with additional needs in this inclusive school. Pupils show a good understanding of issues relating to healthy living and personal safety. They take responsibility as school councillors and are active fundraisers for charities at home and abroad. Pupils, and parents and carers, agree that school is a

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place of safety, although a small minority described some instances of aggressive behaviour between pupils at playtimes. However, no examples of this were seen during the inspection. On the contrary, pupils behave well. Despite the school's efforts to promote good attendance, a small number of families have not been able to ensure that their children attend regularly and attendance figures are below national targets.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Ongoing improvements in provision are helping pupils to enjoy school, learn and progress increasingly well in lessons. Rigorous monitoring ensures the continuing effectiveness of provision. Teaching is of good overall quality. Lessons are usually planned well to take the range of learners' needs into account. The pace of learning is mostly brisk, tasks appropriately challenging and teachers use questions well to extend pupils' thinking. Teachers ensure that pupils are given a clear understanding of what they are expected to do and to achieve in lessons. Good procedures and regular use of assessment ensure that teachers have a clear overview of pupils' progress. Marking gives pupils good advice on how to improve their work. However, the school recognises

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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that the use of individual learning targets, a strong feature in some classes, has not been fully developed across all year groups and so there are some missed opportunities for informing pupils about how well they are doing. It is now taking action to improve this. Well-trained teaching assistants make a good contribution to learning, especially that of pupils who have additional needs.

The curriculum has been revised and is now designed effectively to meet pupils' needs and to reflect their interests. This ensures that they are fully engaged in most lessons. There are good opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their basic literacy and numeracy skills through work across the areas of learning. The curriculum is well enriched by opportunities for pupils to develop skills in sports and to learn a modern foreign language. A range of visitors and visits add well to the effective programme to promote pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education. Carefully planned provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures that they enjoy full access to learning and social inclusion. The curriculum in Key Stage 1 is starting to be adapted to meet the needs of those pupils who enter Year 1 with low levels of skills, for example by providing more opportunities for them to practise their skills during structured play. Pastoral care is good and the school works sensitively to support vulnerable pupils and their families. This is helping to break down the barriers to learning and progress that a number of pupils encounter. Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory. The school works hard to promote good attendance and to support families where there is record of their children's poor attendance, although this has not yet resulted in improved attendance by a small minority of pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, is successfully bringing the new staff team together in a shared commitment to her vision for taking the school forward. Regular progress reviews enable staff to identify and support pupils with additional needs. As a result, those pupils attain well in relation to their abilities and starting points. There has not yet been a similar impact on the progress and attainment of pupils in the middle- and higher-ability groups in Key Stage 1 and Years 3 and 4, however. This is because the school has not been sufficiently strategic in identifying and supporting pupils who may be underachieving. Good monitoring practice is assuring the good overall quality of teaching. Subject leaders contribute actively to ensuring the good

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quality of the curriculum. The supportive governing body is increasing its capacity to hold the school to account. Most parents and carers expressed positive views of the school, reflecting the positive relationships that prevail between parents and carers, and staff. The school regularly canvasses parents' and carers' views on important issues. Despite its good efforts, it has not yet been able to engage fully with a minority of families with problems relating to attendance. The school complies with statutory requirements for safeguarding, health and safety, and child protection. It supports equal opportunities and access to educational entitlement satisfactorily. The school contributes well to community cohesion through its links in the parish and the community. It has effective partnerships with the high school and local specialist schools. In addition, it helps to support a student in India and has partnerships with a range of agencies that promote pupils' health, welfare, social and learning needs.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's skills on entry to Nursery are often well below expectations for the age group. They make good progress, but by the end of the Reception Year a significant proportion of children still have not reached expected levels. The quality of teaching is good, with a good balance of activities initiated by the children themselves and those led and directed by adults. Staff provide a range of activities that are interesting and fun for children and present a good level of challenge. Relationships are caring and warm and, consequently, children are happy and secure in the setting. Provision to ensure their welfare is good and meets requirements. Assessment is based on careful observations of children in

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their activities and is used effectively to plan for their individual learning needs. Although relationships with parents and carers are positive, parents and carers are not yet involved enough as partners in their children's learning and assessment. The learning environment is bright and welcoming and the outdoor area has been developed well to support active learning through play. The setting is led and managed well and the staff team work together effectively to promote the children's learning and well-being. Provision is monitored regularly and this supports ongoing improvements. Links with external agencies help to support the progress of children with additional learning, language or social needs.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The rate of response to the questionnaire was low. A very large majority of those who responded said they agree or strongly agree that they are happy with their children's experience at the school. This is in line with the inspection team's judgement on the school's satisfactory overall effectiveness. A small number of parents and carers were critical of the school's management of unacceptable behaviour: the inspection team did not agree with them, finding that pupils' behaviour is good and is managed well by the staff.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Birkenhead Christ Church CofE Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 23 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 205 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	78	3	13	1	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	13	57	9	39	1	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	12	52	11	48	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	12	52	10	43	1	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	13	57	9	39	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	48	10	43	2	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	52	10	43	1	4	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	9	39	13	57	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	43	12	52	1	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	52	10	43	1	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	43	11	48	1	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	11	48	8	35	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	14	61	8	35	1	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



25 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Birkenhead Christ Church C of E Primary School, Birkenhead, CH41 2UJ

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome when we visited your school.

As you know, we came to see how well the school is doing and how you are all getting on with your learning. These are some of the things we found.

- The school provides you with a satisfactory standard of education. Christ Church is a happy school and you are well-behaved and polite young people.
- You work hard in your lessons, you enjoy your learning and you get on well with each other and with the adults in school. In this you are helped by good teaching and an interesting curriculum.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage gets your education off to a good start; pupils attain well by the end of Year 6, but progress isn't yet as good as it could be in some of the other years.
- I was very pleased to hear about how much you enjoy school. You also told me that you think the after-school activities are very good.

There is still some work to be done to make Christ Church the best school it can possibly be. I have asked the headteacher and the staff:

- to make some improvements to the way they review your progress, to help to find out when you may need extra support to do as well as you possibly can
- to make sure that the good use made of individual learning targets in some classes is shared throughout the school to help all of you to know how well you are doing
- to continue working on the links between Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 so that children keep making good progress when they join Year 1 and Year 2
- to carry on doing all they can to improve attendance.

You can help with all of this by continuing to do your best, by continuing to be happy learners and by making sure you attend school regularly.

With my very best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Diane Auton

Lead inspector

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