



0-19 Standards Sub-Committee

Date:	Tuesday, 13 March 2012
Time:	6.00 pm
Venue:	Committee Room 3 - Wallasey Town Hall

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AGENDA

- 1. MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Members of the Sub-Committee are asked to consider whether they have a personal or prejudicial interest in connection with any of the items on this agenda and if so to declare it and state the nature of the interest.
- 2. EARLY YEARS CENTRES AND CHILDREN'S CENTRES OFSTED INSPECTIONS NOV 2011 - JAN 2012. (Pages 1 - 44)**
- 3. PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN OFSTED CATEGORIES**
- 4. PRIMARY SCHOOLS OFSTED INSPECTIONS NOV 2011 - JAN 2012. (Pages 45 - 124)**
- 5. SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OFSTED CATEGORIES.**
- 6. SECONDARY SCHOOL OFSTED INSPECTIONS NOV 2011 - JAN 2012. (Pages 125 - 136)**
- 7. SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN OFSTED CATEGORIES.**
- 8. SPECIAL SCHOOLS OFSTED INSPECTIONS NOV 2011 - JAN 2012.**
- 9. CFPS POLICY BRIEFING - ACCOUNTABILITY IN EDUCATION. (Pages 137 - 154)**

10. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS



Inspection report for Eastham Children's Centre

Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	383433
Inspection dates	26 - 27 January 2012
Reporting inspector	Dave Ellwand

Centre leader	Tracy Rimmer
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Willington Avenue Eastham Merseyside CH62 9EB
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Linked school if applicable	136056 Millfields Church of England (Controlled) Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY319683 Buddies at Millfields

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

Report Published: February 2012

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

An inspection of the co-located primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the centre managers, partners, members of the advisory group, representatives of the local authority, front line staff and with users of the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Eastham Children's Centre is a phase two centre which was designated in September 2008 in the Eastham area of Merseyside. It is co-located with Millfields Church of England (Controlled) Primary School in a single storey building, and gives users access to the appropriate level of services, including family support, child-development sessions, outreach sessions, home visiting, play, crèche and access to advice and guidance. Additional health services are provided at a newly-built clinic very close to the centre. A private provider runs a breakfast- and after-school club on the children's centre premises called 'Buddies' which is subject to a separate inspection under Section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. It was last inspected in 2010 and the report can be viewed at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Approximately 1100 children aged from birth to four live in the reach area. Of the 14 super output areas 12 are amongst the 70% least deprived areas. The remaining two super output areas are amongst the 30% most deprived areas. There are 200 children, with 41% of families dependent on worklessness benefits. Nearly all families are of White British heritage.

The local authority provides the strategic management and direction of the centre. The advisory group provides the governance for the centre and for Bebington, Bromborough and

New Ferry Children’s Centres, which together form the South Wirral cluster. The manager was appointed in April 2008 and she is responsible for managing all the centres in the cluster. Most of the other centre staff are very recent appointments following a reorganisation and include an outreach co-ordinator, family support, early years and support workers. Additionally, some staff work across all centres in the cluster, including development workers, a co-ordinator for the childminder network and an Early Years Foundation Stage consultant, who also acts as co-ordinator for special educational needs. On entry to early years provision, most children’s skills, knowledge and abilities are below those normally expected for their age.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

2

Main findings

Eastham Children’s Centre provides a good level of service. Management, staff and partner agencies work together well to provide a welcoming and co-ordinated service leading to good and improving outcomes for children and their families. Users of the centre praise the staff for their commitment to providing a good service and comment very positively on their approachability and wealth of advice and support. Typical views expressed by users are, ‘Without a doubt, it’s a brilliant service that has built my confidence’ and, ‘Before attending the course, I had no self-esteem, no routine and no way of managing my child.’

The manager gives clear leadership to the centre and is well supported by an effective staff team with a very clear view of local needs. Good partnerships extend the range of available services and, with the highly-effective outreach and early years support, provide well-integrated services to users. The centre has increased registrations in the last year, and has been especially successful in registering hard-to-reach families in the 30% most deprived target areas. However, there are still insufficient outreach activities to engage some of the families who have not used the services of the centre previously. The centre has identified a priority to build on its outreach work, and has recently added to the staff team, although it is still too early to see the full impact. Staff supervision is good and is supported by effective training, professional development and team-working across the centres in the cluster.

The advisory board and local authority managers provide effective challenge and support for the centre. They ensure that the centre's provision reflects the priorities of improving the health, safety and well-being of the local community. The advisory board also co-ordinates and plans the provision with other nearby children's centres, so ensures good value for money and avoids duplication. However, there are currently no users of the centre on the advisory board and the centre is not yet succeeding in creating an effective parents' forum. This has an impact on users' ability to be involved in key decision-making and in offering support and challenge to the centre at a strategic level. Communication with users of the centre is good, with many adaptations to the centre's programme in response to users' suggestions. The local authority is providing thorough and accurate data received from partners, the registration system and through recording the impact of outcomes. This is enabling the centre to set more detailed targets, monitor its progress and plan further for improvement. Self-evaluation is accurate. Development plans for the centre effectively reflect the main areas for improvement. Key health and education indicators are improving. Accordingly, the centre's capacity to improve is good.

Health, safety and safeguarding arrangements are good, as are the procedures to promote equality and diversity. Clear and informative information, advice and guidance about adult learning programmes are available. Centre staff support users in accessing information and guidance about employment opportunities from Jobcentre Plus, and further arrangements with an independent provider are enhancing the centre's capacity for improving employability, although it is too early to see the impact of this.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve outreach work to increase the take-up of services by vulnerable families in target areas.
- Ensure the centre has an active and effective parents' forum and builds on parents' capacity to participate on the advisory board.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre promotes healthy lifestyles well in all its activities. Staff give effective guidance and support and use family support drop-in sessions and 'tea and toast' sessions well to pass on advice and resources. Outdoor play and activities are promoted well, including the 'Big Toddle,' and guided family walks around the local woods. Regular play activities and family sports also support children's physical development well. Case studies show successful support given to families to reduce morbid obesity, and overall there is a slight decline in the proportion of children who are obese as they start primary school in the area. The 'Preparing for parenthood' course, run jointly between centre staff and health workers, give expectant parents practical help to prepare for their new baby. This includes a good introduction to exercise and yoga for parent and baby. The centre manager has developed innovative support programmes with the neo-natal unit at the local hospital which is

effective in providing intense support for particularly vulnerable parents and children. The Wirral Early Communication Programme, 'Baby Babble' and 'Talking Tots' sessions ensure the development of good early language skills. Partnerships with health staff have improved screening and early referrals when more extensive language support is needed. Overall, there have been good improvements in outcomes, and typically one early years setting in the area demonstrated a 5% reduction in the number of children at risk of language delay over the previous year. Effective support for disabled children has helped identify suitable specialist provision. One mother explained how the centre gave sensitive help and referral to enable early diagnosis of her child's autism. 'It was explained thoroughly, in layman's terms, and they prepared me well, so it didn't come as a shock.' The advice and encouragement provided by staff help parents to develop their skills, knowledge and confidence, enabling them to understand and support their children's development and behaviour. As one parent said, 'By the end of a session I've learned a lot, feel a million times better and I come out smiling.' There is a good range of parenting courses, with particular attention given to children's emotional health.

Users of the centre feel safe and have good access to activities, advice and equipment for improving safety in their homes. The centre has made steady improvements each year in reducing numbers of children experiencing injuries, particularly in the two most deprived areas. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process is used well to co-ordinate services. Systematic reviews and supervision ensure good outcomes for families, with very effective support for children in need and those on child protection plans. Family support workers provide very effective home visits and outreach work and work well with those families who are hard to engage.

Multi-agency work has enabled those experiencing domestic violence to have good access to specialist services and the centre provides a trusted and safe point of contact for them. Users enjoy attending the centre and taking part in the activities provided. Good use is made of individual education plans and 'Learning Journeys' to guide children's progress throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. The proportion of children reaching the nationally-expected level at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is improving overall and significantly in the target areas. The attainment gap between the lowest-attaining children and the rest is similarly closing.

Overall, parents are effectively involved in the development of the centre and their comments and suggestions are used well in planning activities. However, there is no parents' forum to provide formal input into the advisory group, which has no parents from this centre as members. Those families who are vulnerable and those on low incomes are supported well in accessing childcare provision and there is good information, advice and guidance about adult learning which can lead to training and employment. As a result some users have gained valuable experience as volunteers in the centre which has helped them undertake further training and find employment.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships, and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.	2

How good is the provision?

2

Good partnership-working, thorough reviews and professional supervision, ensure that assessment is robust and that services adapt to meeting the greatest needs. Partnership working has been very successful overall in increasing registrations, especially in the most deprived areas, where almost all families are included. However, there are still insufficient outreach activities aimed at engaging families who have not previously accessed the centre’s services.

Activities are purposeful and well-planned to focus clearly on the learning and development of parents and their children. Provision is of good quality and held in high regard by centre users. Sessions help children to become familiar with making choices and build effective trusting relationships. Parents feel that the confidence staff have in them develops their ability to improve the outcomes for their families. One parent said, ‘The sessions gave me really sound stepping stones. I’ve gained so much confidence and I’m a different person now.’ Users are encouraged to build on their successes and they receive certificates when they complete courses.

The care, guidance and support provided by staff are good. Many users comment on the very positive welcome that they get from the centre and how important that is in establishing trust when they are vulnerable or when they experience crises. One young couple described the very extensive support they had in coping with multiple difficulties in the early months of having their first child. ‘We came through a lot and had such help; it felt like we lived in the centre.’ Users also comment that the support is personalised and that staff are very sensitive to their needs. Staff give very practical support, for example in helping users to attend meetings or complete application forms, but there is also considerable emotional support and encouragement for them to gain confidence and self-reliance. Users of the centre praise very highly the care and support from staff and they are

very conscious of the progress made and the growth of self-esteem. As one expressed it, 'I'd still be a bag of nerves at home, without their help.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Governance arrangements for the centre are good and are well-understood by staff and partners. Service provision is clearly linked to strategic planning, with clear targeting to meet national and local priorities. Overall, outcomes are good and improving and are well-supported by detailed action-planning. The local authority provides good leadership for the centre and ensures it is held to account. The authority provides high-quality data about the area and about the centre's performance. This data are used well to identify local needs and to enable very effective monitoring of the centre's progress.

Premises and resources are safe and well-used. Management of the centre is good, with detailed financial control and regular review of budgets. The staff work effectively with a wide range of partners, including other centres, to make the best use of resources and increase the services available. Therefore, value for money is good. Staff are deployed well, with very good training and development support and inductions for new staff are thorough. Partners are active on the advisory board, including representatives of the authority, schools, private, voluntary and independent providers, faith and community groups, Jobcentre Plus and health services. This is effective in co-ordinating the work of all the centres in the cluster and in developing integrated provision. However, parents from the centre are not currently represented on the advisory board and there is no active parents' forum. The advisory board is in the process of setting up sub-groups for each individual centre in the cluster, but it is too early to determine if this will succeed in enabling users of the centre to play a more active role in its management.

Inclusion of children and their families is central to the centre's purpose. It is very welcoming to all and it promotes equality well. The centre celebrates cultural diversity with appropriate displays and activities, such as using Chinese New Year themes throughout the centre. The centre works consistently to improve the involvement of target groups in the community. Recent consultations with the local autism support group identified improvements in the centre's layout and lighting to remove barriers to young people being comfortable in the centre. Action has been taken to address the recommendations and has enabled greater participation.

Staff, partner agencies and users have a good understanding of their responsibilities for safeguarding and are clear about the procedures for reporting concerns. The centre fully implements safe recruitment procedures, including enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks, to ensure that all staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children and vulnerable adults. All staff and volunteers have undergone up-to-date safeguarding training. The centre rigorously uses comprehensive health and safety risk assessments for all venues and activities.

Partnerships are very effective and have enabled centre users to access a wider range of support and expertise. Good-quality assurance processes and the monitoring of partnership-working, effectively supports the development of an integrated service.

These are the grades for leadership and management:

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision.	3

Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

The children's centre inspection findings were informed by a parallel inspection of the separately-managed Millfields Church of England (Controlled) Primary School on 25 and 26 January 2012.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Eastham Children's Centre on 26 - 27 January 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank those of you who came to talk to us when we inspected your centre. You told us that Eastham Children's Centre is a supportive centre with good-quality provision. We heard how you appreciate the welcome that you receive from the centre and how important this is to you, particularly in times of crisis. Many of you praise the staff for the support they give, often going the extra mile to be helpful, with a wealth of advice and support. We saw how the centre's staff and management work well together with partner agencies to provide a good service and how this leads to improvements in your lives and those of your children. We heard two typical views expressed by users, 'Without a doubt, it's a brilliant service that has built my confidence' and, 'Before attending the course, I had no self-esteem, no routine and no way of managing my child.'

The centre manager gives clear leadership and is well-supported by a highly-effective staff team. Partnerships, such as those with health visitors and colleagues, extend the range of services. There are good home visiting and outreach activities, with the some highly-effective support for play and early years work. We heard how the centre helps explain children's development and behaviour so that parents are encouraged to develop the skills, confidence and knowledge to support them. As one parent said, 'By the end of a session I've learned a lot, feel a million times better and I come out smiling.' There is a good range of parenting courses, with particular attention given to children's emotional health.

A lot of effective support helps children make good progress in their communication and social skills and prepares them well for going on to primary school. We heard how programmes like 'Talking Tots' help children with their speech and listening skills and how this is improving every year in your area. We also heard of how the health of children and families in the area is improving with support for play and exercise activities and good advice about healthy eating. There is clear information, advice and guidance about adult learning programmes and good support for improving opportunities to find work.

The centre has been successful in registering more of the families in your area, especially in those parts where there are the most difficulties for families. We are recommending that the centre does more outreach activities to better meet the needs of those families who have not made use of the centre before.

There is good management of staff and they receive effective training and professional development. Many of the staff have come to the centre only recently, but they have a detailed induction to the centre and often work with the support of teams in other centres in South Wirral.

The advisory board and local authority managers challenge and support the centre well. They keep the centre working on the priorities of improving the health, safety and well-being of your community. The advisory board also co-ordinates and plans provision with other nearby children's centres, so ensures good value for money and avoids duplication. Many of you share your views and ideas with the centre, to suggest ways to improve the activities. However, the centre is not yet succeeding in setting up an effective parents' forum and there are currently no users of this centre on the advisory board. We are recommending that the centre finds ways of involving you more in making decisions about the centre and we hope many more of you can play an active part in this.

The centre makes good use of statistics about the area to set more detailed targets and measure its progress. It has an accurate view of how it is doing and can effectively plan for further progress. We saw that there are important improvements in the health and education in the area. Accordingly, we feel that the centre has good capacity to improve further.

The centre gives high priority to health and safety and has good systems for ensuring the protection of your children. It promotes equality and diversity well. It provides a centre which helps all children and families feel included.

Thank you for your help in this inspection and we wish you every success in the future. The full report is available from your centre or on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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Inspection report for Bidston & St James Children's Centre

Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	383635
Inspection dates	14–15 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Tim Vaughan HMI

Centre leader	Mrs Teresa Lawton
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	St James Centre 344 Laird Street Birkenhead Merseyside CH41 7AL
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY350219
	EY350215
	EY350221

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, senior leaders, front-line staff and representatives from the local authority. Discussions were also held with members of the advisory board, a range of partners, parents and carers, and service users. The inspectors observed the centre's work, accompanied staff on a home visit, visited a range of sites used by the centre and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Bidston & St James Children's Centre is located in the Birkenhead North district of Wirral. The centre has developed from a Sure Start Local Programme and was designated as a phase one children's centre in March 2006. Governance arrangements are through an advisory board reporting to the local authority.

There are nine super output areas served by the centre and each is economically and socially disadvantaged. Four are ranked in the top 1% of the most deprived in the country and the remaining five are ranked in the top 10% most deprived. The proportion of children aged under four who are living in households where no one is working is 60.45%. The number of families benefiting from the childcare element of working tax credit is 19.71%. A high proportion of local families is from a White British background with 5.83% of families from a range of minority ethnic groups.

The centre provides the full core purpose across two linked sites, half a mile apart. The St James Centre is a purpose built community facility managed by North Birkenhead Development Trust. The premises includes Bidston & St James's children's centre, St James Library, Wirral Metropolitan Neighbourhood College, a community café, an infant mental health service for children's centres commissioned from Child and Adolescent Mental Health

Team (CAMHS) and the Bidston and St James Area Team. The building incorporates a 35-place nursery operated by the children's centre. The linked site is Brassey Gardens Children's Centre. This is a purpose built site providing outreach activities and services including clinics, parenting programmes and drop in.

Childcare is provided by three Early Years settings each operated by the children's centre. Bidston & St.James Children's Centre-Miriam Place Nursery was separately inspected in December 2011. Seedlings at Joseph Paxton was last inspected in February 2011. The third early years setting Bidston & St James Children's Centre operates periodically in support of a specific adult learning course and was last inspected in November 2005. Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with a much lower range of skills than that expected for their age.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

2

Main findings

This is a good children's centre. A key strength is that collaborative work with a wide range of partners enhances the opportunities on offer for local people. Leaders give careful attention to how the centre can add value to the work of statutory, private, voluntary and independent providers rather than compete or duplicate services. This has meant that centre services have become more effectively targeted, integrated and accessible. Good use is also made of a range of sites to deliver activities and reach local families, including those from target groups. For example, funding, information and staff time are very effectively deployed through a range of existing community houses and community centres. As a result, most outcomes for children and families are good.

The centre provides a broad range of services, a very safe environment and good levels of care, support and advice to children and families. One parent said: 'People have got their lives back on track because of this centre.' At times of crisis, families are well supported across a range of needs through family support and strong multi-agency links. The quality of support for women through the 'Freedom Programme' is exceptional because it is transforming individual lives.

The innovative co-location of a nursery, community college and public library within the Bidston St James Centre has meant that the promotion of learning, development and enjoyment is at the heart of the children's centre's work. This has led to increased participation by target groups of families, including greater use of library services and adult learning. Across the three Early Years settings operated by the children's centre and a range of group activities, provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is very effective.

Quality assurance and risk assessment systems for safeguarding are well established. Staff have a good knowledge of child protection procedures; they are well trained and work effectively with other agencies to co-ordinate family support and to share relevant information.

Equality and diversity are strongly promoted, and children and parents with disabilities are supported particularly well. A range of festivals is celebrated throughout the year and imagery around both main sites used by the children's centre reflect a range of culture, ages, ethnicity and gender, which helps promote the environment as welcoming and inclusive.

The views of children and parents are regularly gathered and used to improve the services on offer. However, centre leaders are well aware that there is no parent's forum, nor opportunities for parents to undertake voluntary work. They are also aware that at present only some families are engaged in the centre advisory board. Nonetheless, overall outcomes and leadership are good and improving and senior leaders, staff and the advisory board are clear about priorities for further improvement. Along with the centre's other strengths, including good partnerships, the centre's capacity to improve further is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the extent to which parents engage in positive behaviour by increasing the number involved in the advisory board
- Increase user engagement by extending opportunities for parents to shape services through a parent forum and through voluntary work

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Outcomes for children and parents are good and improving. Families report that they are benefiting from the wide range of opportunities that the centre provides to promote their health and well-being. These include very effective support on breastfeeding, parent-child relationships, healthy eating, oral health and physical activity. As a result, the local rate of breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks has increased by 3.2% and the level of obesity for local Reception Year children has declined by 3%. Furthermore, the level of family engagement with health services has been increased through the provision of on-site clinics for physiotherapy, dietetic and paediatric support.

Families who previously had low confidence and a lack of self-belief told inspectors that the centre has helped them to be assertive and believe in themselves again. This is because there is carefully planned use of evidence-based parenting programmes and specialist staff as well as a broad understanding across centre workers of attachment and well-being. As one parent said, 'Staff get involved in the emotional side of your life and help you'. Another parent commented, 'They feel like an extension of your family.'

Families feel safe when using the centre and are confident to approach staff for support with needs ranging from parenting, social isolation and confidence to depression, substance misuse and personal safety. Staff use the Common Assessment Framework very effectively to assess and plan support for individuals. Outcomes for children on child protection plans are good because families are treated with respect, given high quality access visits and carefully planned help. Through good links to social care the centre knows about each local child on a child protection plan. The progress of children who are in care is effectively monitored and their carers are given tailored advice and guidance. Because of this work, child safety in local homes has increased and the number of hospital admissions has declined over the last two years, including in the most deprived local super output areas.

Early Years Foundation Stage data show that outcomes have improved by 24.9% over three years. Crucially, this increase has occurred at the same time as the gap between different groups of children has narrowed. In the nursery at the St James Centre children make good progress from their starting points and children with special needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress. This is because of outstanding provision and leadership of the setting as well as the support of the centre's Early Years consultant. Most families using the centre are developing their skills through adult learning at the on-site community college and through a range of centre-based group activities. Parents report that this has increased their parenting abilities and their own educational achievement.

Children and families using the centre behave well, have positive relationships and treat one another with respect. Most families say that they are happy with the centre and feel listened to when they suggest improvements. However, there has been a recent reduction in parent members of the advisory board and there is not a parent forum in place. Senior leaders are aware of the need to increase parent involvement in centre governance.

Support provided by the centre helps to promote economic stability. Children are encouraged to be active, inquisitive and independent learners in the range of activities provided. In addition, parents are supported with a good range of advice in securing benefits, budgeting, accessing local training courses and in seeking work. Several parents commented that the centre has helped them to gain new skills and subsequent employment. The number of local people in households dependent upon workless benefits has decreased by 5.4% over the last four years.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships, and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	3
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.	2

How good is the provision?

2

Staff know the local area well. Through close links with other organisations, they have also developed a good understanding of the local barriers to engagement and achievement. As a result, staff use a range of locations to reach families which are aimed at adding to, rather than duplicating the work already being undertaken by others. This has enabled the centre to increase registrations to 70% and this includes most local children living in workless households. Registration and take-up of services by other target groups are good. For example, a majority of children from minority ethnic groups and all local disabled children are registered and accessing activities within the centre.

Through good partnerships with a range of statutory and voluntary agencies, assessments of child and family needs are comprehensive. Each family visited at home or attending on-site groups or clinics receives effective tailored support. The strong partnership links with health services means that health visitors feel comfortable to suggest to the centre which individual centre worker might be most appropriate to support a family. In addition child psychologists from the on-site CAMHS team offer staff advice about their work as well as support specific families, for example mothers with post-natal depression. At times of crisis, families feel strongly supported. Parents typically commented: 'when I struggled they helped me'. Furthermore, parents experiencing domestic violence feel empowered through the exceptional support provided to them by the centre.

Learning and development are at the heart of the work of the centre. This has been achieved through the accessibility of the on-site public library, community college, group activities and the Early Years settings. Child and parent activities, such as the 'Time to Talk' group are good because they are purposeful and engaging. The personal development and achievement of children, parents and staff are celebrated and a range of new skills and qualifications is being achieved. The children's centre directly provides childcare in three Early Years settings. The largest of these was inspected separately in December 2011 and judged outstanding. The other two settings were judged good when inspected.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The centre is driven forward by the quiet determination of the centre manager to improve the lives of local children and their families. Staff actively seek partnerships with statutory, private, voluntary and independent sector groups in order to enhance opportunities for local families, particularly target groups. As a result, a range of partners contributes very effectively to centre priorities.

Inclusion is central to the centre's work. Consequently, gaps in attainment, such as that between girls and boys by the end of the Reception Year, are narrowing. Imagery used in displays throughout the centre reflects the commitment to equality and diversity and helps a wide range of people, for example fathers, to feel valued and respected. Community languages are also promoted. Polish families are increasingly engaging with the centre because staff take care to support their needs. Services for disabled children are well coordinated and the centre has a clear understanding of how to improve their life chances.

The centre has a clear safeguarding policy, as well as policies regarding a range of related issues such as home visiting and lone working. Clear information sharing protocols are strongly adhered to and links with social care are very effective. Appropriate vetting and criminal record bureau checks for staff are fully in place. All staff have undertaken appropriate safeguarding training and senior staff have undertaken further safer recruitment training. There is regular discussion about child protection within the staff team and at advisory board meetings. Support on domestic violence is well established and counselling and mental health support is offered to parents to promote their emotional health.

Members of the advisory board play an increasingly effective role in supporting the centre including discussing centre data. Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and understood. As a group, the advisory board is committed to improving the quality of provision and take appropriate action when necessary to support improvements or to question proposals.

Senior leaders systematically monitor and evaluate practice. Data and a good knowledge of other local services are used well to inform development planning. However, there are not yet good opportunities for the engagement of users in shaping services and evaluating the effectiveness of provision. Even so, the care taken to complement and not undermine the work of partners, the use of a range of venues, the co-location with other services at the St

James Centre and the good outcomes achieved, indicate that the centre provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management:

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision.	3

Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

Inspection reports and RAISE online reports for local primary schools and inspection reports for three private nurseries were used to inform judgements.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Bidston & St James Children's Centre on 14-15 December 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We spoke to several of you about the centre's work. We really enjoyed chatting with you during your activities, around the centre and in the centre café. You expressed your opinions very clearly and they were very helpful to us – thank you. We were delighted to hear your positive views about how approachable and understanding you find the staff. We particularly liked the comment from a parent who said, 'People have got their lives back on track because of this centre'.

You told us how much you value the activities on offer and that coming to the centre has given you more confidence and helped you make new friends. We were pleased to hear that, as a result, many of you feel less isolated in the community and feel more confident as parents. We found that the centre is helping children to achieve as much as they can. We were pleased to find that parents are also benefiting from the groups being provided by the centre – learning about healthy eating, child development and much more.

The centre works effectively with a wide range of partners including voluntary sector groups. We were pleased to find that the way that the centre keeps children, families and staff safe is good.

We found that the advisory board that oversees the centre is effective. However, we have asked the centre to find ways to ensure that more parents and carers become board members.

We were encouraged to see how hard the centre is working to make sure that it is a place for the whole community. We know how much you appreciate the fact that staff go out of their way to get to know you and your families and visit you in your homes. We can see how the centre is making a positive difference to your lives and we found that the support given to some of you through the Freedom project is excellent.

The staff work really hard to make the centre as good as it can be. We know that they regularly ask for your views so that the centre can find ways to improve. We have suggested that they create opportunities for you to advise the centre through a parent forum and to contribute through volunteering opportunities.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Bidston & St.James Children's Centre- Miriam Place Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number EY350219
Inspection date 12/12/2011
Inspector Barbara Wearing

Setting address St. James Centre, 344 Laird Street, Birkenhead,
Merseyside, CH41 7AL

Telephone number 0151 651 0901
Email mariecaton@wirral.gov.uk
Type of setting Childcare - Non-Domestic

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

Please see our website for more information about each childcare provider. We publish inspection reports, conditions of registration and details of complaints we receive where we or the provider take action to meet the requirements of registration.

Description of the setting

Miriam Place Nursery first opened in 2004 and was re-registered in 2007. It is provided by Wirral Children's Services and operates from a designated area within Bidston and St. James Children's Centre in the Birkenhead area of Wirral. The nursery has its own self-contained facilities including a milk kitchen, laundry and staff room. There is a large open playroom that is divided up to create different areas for babies and toddlers/pre-school children. The setting provides a separate playroom that is allocated for the one to two year old children, a sleep room/quiet room and dining room. All children have continuous access to a secure outdoor play area.

The nursery is registered on the Early Years Childcare Register to provide care for a maximum of 35 children aged from birth to five years, at any one time. The nursery is open from 8am until 6pm each weekday, for 49 weeks of the year. There are currently 54 children on roll. The nursery currently supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language. There are 11 permanent staff employed, these are supported by three long term agency staff. All permanent staff hold appropriate early years qualifications, two of whom, have Early Years Professional Status. The nursery receives support from the children's centre foundation stage consultant.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Children have great fun, develop extremely high self-esteem and make excellent progress within the superbly stimulating and welcoming nursery environment. The individual needs, wishes and ideas of children, parents and staff, shape future developments within the nursery. Managers and staff are highly motivated to continually improve their skills and the outcomes for children. They are rightfully proud of the high quality nursery provision that puts children at the centre of all they do.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- further enhance children's learning journeys by ensuring that they all clearly show the next skills intended for children's learning

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Robust procedures are in place to ensure that all staff have a thorough knowledge and understanding of their own and their manager's role in safeguarding children.

Regular risk assessments are carried out and records of accidents and incidents are routinely reviewed. These identify hazards and appropriate action is taken to reduce the risk of accidental injury. Rigorous recruitment and vetting procedures are followed to ensure that staff are suitable to be working with children and hold appropriate qualifications. Comprehensive records, policies and procedures are consistently implemented and regularly updated, further promoting children's safety and welfare.

The nursery is lead and managed exceedingly well. An extensive range of systems are in place to reflect on every aspect of the provision. These include views of staff, parents, children and other professionals. Therefore, developments are highly responsive to the needs and interests of the children being cared for and have a positive impact on the excellent outcomes for them. The highly motivated staff team share the managers' strong ambition for their personal development and improvements to the nursery. Staff, parents and children are valued as unique individuals and develop confidence and high self-esteem.

Great care is taken to ensure that the environment is welcoming to all, challenging stereotypes, reflecting languages spoken by families within the nursery and positive images of our diverse society. Children have free access to a fantastic selection of high quality toys and resources, indoors and outdoors, throughout the day. Both these areas provide superb levels of stimulation and promote children's excellent progress in all areas, recognising and valuing that some children prefer to be physically active in their play and learning. Children use facilities at the children's centre, such as, the library and take part in activities, such as, baby bounce and story time.

Excellent partnerships have been established with a range of other professionals. These ensure that children are safeguarded and receive appropriate support to enable them to progress to their full potential from their individual starting points. A variety of ways have been introduced to build links with other early years settings that children attend. Strong links with early years settings that children transfer to, eases their transition to school. The nursery works closely with the college in the children's centre, providing childcare places to allow families to gain access to support, employment and training opportunities. Highly positive relationships with parents ensure that they are fully involved in the provision offered to their children. Parents are encouraged to share what they know about their child, their progress and interests. Information regarding their children and the nursery is shared with parents in various ways. Parents feel welcomed and praise the nursery and staff. They feel that they have supported them and their children well and as a result, their children are making good progress in their development.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Systems for observation, assessment and planning are thorough and purposeful. They clearly reflect children's interests and achievements and track their progress towards the early learning goals. Weekly plans show how each child will be

supported and their individual development promoted. These are evaluated and used, together with observations to devise next steps for children to achieve. Learning journeys are completed termly and are shared with parents. They reflect children's skills at a particular point in time and some show aims for children's future skills. Staff know their key children very well and are highly skilled at interacting with them, providing activities and asking questions to challenge and extend their language and learning. Staff have developed their confidence and skills within this area as they have implemented the Every Child a Talker programme.

Babies and children are nurtured by the caring nursery staff. They are relaxed, happy and develop great confidence and an extremely strong sense of belonging within the nursery. Staff have appropriate expectations of children, allowing them freedom to explore, express their preferences and develop skills to keep themselves safe within secure boundaries. Visual prompts and key words in children's home language are used throughout the day to support children's understanding and to ensure that children who speak English as an additional language are fully included. Children quickly become confident communicators and staff work closely with parents to further promote these skills at home. Children eagerly talk to adults and their friends about their play, wishes and needs. They learn the meaning of words through first hand experiences. For example, staff encourage them to play their instruments 'fast' or 'slowly' and show them 'under' and 'over' when they build bridges with large dominoes. Children who are able to recognise colours and recognise their own and others names, enjoy playing hide and seek, searching for cards with children's names or colours.

Many opportunities are taken to develop children's problem solving, reasoning and numeracy skills through planned and spontaneous activities and a wide range of resources. Older children recognise numerals on a number board and look at who has the biggest and smallest hands. An extensive range of natural resources are accessible for children to explore using all their senses indoors and out. They have a planting area and sensory garden and explore leaves, twigs and bugs using magnifying glasses. Staff support children as they discover how to blow bubbles through a tube in the water trough. Children's creativity and imagination is promoted as they have free access to a range of creative art materials, musical instruments and role play resources. Eager children are supported by staff in putting on their favourite compact discs. They dance to the music, using maracas as microphones.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted very well. Children are physically active indoors and out, developing good, large muscle skills and coordination. Babies crawl up their climbing frame and older children run and ride bikes outdoors and throw balls through a hoop. Staff talk to children about changes to their bodies after exercise, feeling how their heart beats faster. Children enjoy healthy, nutritious meals and snacks at sociable mealtimes. They develop independence as they serve themselves their lunch and wash their own hands with the support of staff as and when needed.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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Leasowe Early Years and Adult Learning Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104985
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	377152
Inspection dates	6–7 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Elaine Murray HMI

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne McMullan
Headteacher	Mary Mitchell
Date of previous school inspection	13 May 2009
School address	Twickenham Drive Moreton Wirral CH46 2QF
Telephone number	0151 6398923
Fax number	0151 6392503
Email address	schooloffice@leasowe-nursery.wirral.sch.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. She visited four sessions, observing two class teachers and a variety of nursery workers. The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, staff, parents and carers, the Chair of the Governing Body and spoke informally with children. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a range of evidence including staff planning, children's learning journeys, monitoring and self-evaluation, staff questionnaires and 28 parent and carer questionnaires.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. She looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which more-able children are challenged.
- The impact of the outdoor Forest School garden on improving outcomes for children.
- How well the nursery addresses differences in the performance of different groups.

Information about the school

Leasowe Early Years and Adult Learning Centre provides nursery education, childcare and a children's centre for the community of Leasowe. This report is for the inspection of the nursery school. The childcare provision and children's centre were inspected separately, and reports can be found on Ofsted's website. The nursery school is average size compared with schools offering similar provision. At the end of their time in nursery the children transfer to Reception classes in a number of local primary schools. Almost all the children are White British and very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language. A small number of children have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The centre has gained the Inclusion Award, the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Healthy Schools 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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main Findings

This is a good nursery school. Children are happy, settled and keen to learn. A close and highly effective partnership with parents and carers has a positive impact on children's learning. Parents and carers praise the communication with staff and typically comment that 'My child has come on in leaps and bounds'. Children thrive in the welcoming and caring environment provided. The good level of care and support for individuals is reflected in children's strong sense of security. Children behave well and have positive attitudes to their learning.

As a result of good teaching and an exciting curriculum which effectively follows their interests, children make good progress in their learning. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress. Children benefit from the spacious and stimulating outdoor learning environment. They develop a keen enjoyment of outdoor play as they enthusiastically explore the nursery's Forest School garden. They demonstrate an excellent awareness of how to keep safe as they describe why they cannot walk through the area for building fires, and ask for adult support as they learn to climb trees. Children are generally questioned effectively to encourage them to think and extend their learning. However, the quality of questioning is not always consistently high with particular regard to developing children's skills in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy. The indoor learning environment provides an interesting range of resources and activities to promote children's independence and learning, although the reading area is not planned and resourced to best effect.

Senior leaders and governors provide strong leadership. A number of recent changes to the staff team have been well managed to ensure the continued success of the school. The quality of teaching is well monitored. Assessment systems have improved and developed. Self-evaluation is effective in sustaining strengths and bringing about improvement. The introduction of the nursery's Forest School garden and initiatives to develop children's communication and language skills have had a positive impact on the quality of children's learning experiences and progress. These measures demonstrate the school's good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that staff consistently question children effectively to develop learning, particularly in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy.
- Further develop the indoor environment to provide a more stimulating area for children to choose books and develop early reading skills.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

2

Children clearly enjoy their learning and are eager to attend the nursery. Most children enter the nursery with skill levels that are below those expected for their age, particularly in their communication and language. By the time they leave nursery to transfer to school most children's skill levels are in line with those expected for their age. This represents good progress.

Children make particularly good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and communication and language skills. Children's self-esteem and motivation in learning is well developed through their experiences in the outdoor Forest School garden. Children enthusiastically recall the activities they were engaged in at their previous visit to the garden. They show fascination as they roll back logs to hunt for insects and worms. They develop physical skills as they learn to climb trees with adult support and run to gather equipment to make a 'castle'. Children learn to solve problems as they decide how they will move a heavy log, and, when playing indoors, how much wrapping paper they will need to wrap a Christmas present. They show good progress in learning to use mathematical language as they describe the size of their presents and the length of paper needed. They show increasing confidence in expressing their ideas and thoughts as they contribute at small group times. Children show enthusiasm for their learning as they engage in activities which are interesting and meaningful to them. For example, they enjoy role play in the well-resourced 'Santa's grotto' and enjoy making reindeer and food for reindeer in the outdoor area.

Children have positive relationships with staff and each other. They are familiar with the clear routines of the nursery, which contribute to their good behaviour. They respond well to expectations that they take responsibility and show initiative, for example at tidy-up time. Children cooperate well as they construct a 'castle' in the Forest School garden. Children show a good awareness of being healthy as they routinely wash their hands after toileting and before eating. They plant fruit and vegetables in the nursery garden, which they enjoy eating.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

The vast majority of teaching is good, characterised by effective questioning to encourage children to think and skilful support to encourage children to make choices in their learning. Effective use of praise and encouragement successfully develops children's confidence and self-esteem and promotes their good behaviour. Staff effectively encourage the development of children's speaking skills at small group time as children are skilfully encouraged to share with the group what they have been involved in during the session. Children's progress is carefully assessed and tracked and staff plan to meet the needs of different ages and abilities. Where teaching is most effective, staff use their knowledge of children's capabilities to target questions well to develop learning. This provides challenge for children, including the more able. In a minority of sessions, chances to develop and extend learning, particularly in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy are missed with the result that learning is not as effective.

The curriculum provides a broad and interesting range of experiences which are based on children's interests and needs. The introduction of the Forest Garden has enhanced this provision. The outdoor environment provides a stimulating area in which all areas of learning are effectively developed. The indoor environment is generally well organised and provides well for the development of children's speaking and writing skill in particular. The reading area is not as effectively organised or inviting, with the result that children do not always take opportunities to use this area independently to further develop their love and understanding of books.

There is a strong commitment to meeting the needs of the individual. Staff recognise that some families require extra support and work very closely with parents and carers, as well as outside agencies when required. As a result, the nursery is successful in helping individuals overcome significant barriers to their education.

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

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The nursery benefits from good leadership and management. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governing body work well to accurately evaluate the nursery. They have a shared commitment to improvement. The school improvement plan accurately identifies what the nursery needs to do next. The school is vigilant in tracking and assessing the progress of all children, so that any gaps are identified and closed. Strategies to improve children's progress in developing language skills have been effective, particularly for those children who entered nursery with a low level of skill development. Leaders accurately evaluate the performance of different groups of children and put effective action into place to address any identified differences. For example, there are currently good measures to further promote boys' problem solving, reasoning and numeracy skills.

The governing body is influential in shaping the school's direction and holding it to account. It offers good levels of support and challenge. The governing body has rigorous procedures to ensure the health, safety and well-being of staff and children. The effective safeguarding procedures fully meet government requirements and are regularly reviewed. Staff are vigilant at keeping children safe in a supportive and caring environment.

The school promotes equal opportunities well. Staff work effectively to promote a positive ethos where differences are recognised and celebrated. As a result, children from different backgrounds get on well together. Children learn about their wider community and are introduced to the customs, faiths and lifestyles of different countries.

Effective partnerships with other agencies contribute positively to the progress of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Close links with local schools ensure that children's transition to school is positive and smooth as possible. Highly effective communication with parents ensures that they are well informed about their children's progress in learning and have a good awareness of how to develop their children's learning at home. The provision of courses within the children's centre for parents and carers, such as those for family learning, helps them to do so.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Completed questionnaires were received from 63% of parents and carers, which is a higher than average response rate. The responses were overwhelmingly positive in all areas. All respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statements made. Comments which were made all expressed highly positive views. Typical comments include, 'All members of staff make sure my child is happy and safe in nursery and the support is exceptional'.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Leasowe Early Years and Adult Learning Centre 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 **28** completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 44 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	89	3	11	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	26	93	1	4	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	24	86	4	14	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	82	5	18	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	24	86	4	14	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	82	5	18	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	86	4	14	0	0	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)	24	86	4	14	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	82	5	18	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	75	6	21	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	79	6	21	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	25	89	3	11	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	25	89	3	11	0	0	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 all its pupils' needs.
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Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



8 December 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Leasowe Early Years and Adult Learning Centre, Wirral, CH46 2QF

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to visit your nursery school. It was lovely to meet you all and to see the interesting things you do when you are at nursery.

You come to a good nursery. I could see you have lots of fun and learn a lot because your teachers give you so many exciting things to do. It was lovely to see how much you enjoyed using your Forest School garden and how many good things you learn while you are there. Your parents and carers told me that they are very happy with the nursery and that you all enjoy coming.

Your teachers look after you very well and are good at helping you to learn. I have asked them to help you even more by making sure they always ask you the best questions about what you are doing to help you to learn more. I have also asked them to make your reading area even more interesting for you.

I hope you continue to have a lovely time.

Yours sincerely

Elaine Murray
Her Majesty's Inspector

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Castleway Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105002
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	382339
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Angela Milner HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) 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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	143
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pete Henry
Headteacher	Val Kermode
Date of previous school inspection	27 April 2010
School address	Castleway North Moreton Wirral Merseyside CH46 1RN
Telephone number	0151 677 2953
Fax number	0151 677 6953
Email address	headteacher@castleway.wirral.sch.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out at no notice by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. When Castleway was inspected in April 2010 it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an adequate standard of education and the person's responsible for leading, managing or governing the school were not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors visited the school termly to check on its progress. This inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection visit. During the course of the visit, the inspector judged that the school was at least satisfactory in all areas and also judged leaders were demonstrating capacity to secure further improvement. As a result, the visit was deemed to be a section 5 inspection.

The inspector observed 12 lessons, scrutinised documents and pupils' work and the arrangements for safeguarding. Two joint observations were conducted with the headteacher. The inspector met with members of the school council, the headteacher, other members of staff, representatives of the governing body and the local authority. Pupils' behaviour and their work in lessons and around the school were also observed. There were no questionnaires for parents and carers as this was a scheduled monitoring visit. The school's information, including minutes from meetings of the parents' forum and discussions with parent governors were used to assess parental views of the school.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The impact of initiatives to improve pupils' attainment and their rates of progress.
- The quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning, particularly in reading.
- The curriculum and how well it meets statutory requirements and the needs and interests of learners.
- The capacity of leadership and management at all levels to sustain improvements made since the previous inspection.

Information about the school

Castleway is a smaller than the average sized primary school. The majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. Substantial staffing changes took place in September 2011 with the appointment of a new headteacher, three new class teachers and a teacher responsible for reading interventions. The school has achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Healthy School status and the Activemark Award. The school is also a Fair Trade school.

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

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Castleway provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. Leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, are now demonstrating satisfactory capacity to make further improvements. This is because of the focused drive for improvement and the school's careful management of teaching and learning. Increased capacity can also be seen in the substantial improvements made to the school's curriculum, the accurate use of assessment information and the adoption of tracking systems to monitor pupils' progress. These have been used to plan motivating and structured learning experiences which are better matched to pupils' learning needs, to identify underperformance and then provide appropriate interventions to accelerate learning and raise attainment.

The headteacher has rigorously monitored the work of the school this term and has a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. She has worked with her senior leadership team and the local authority to prioritise actions, provide appropriate training and development and continue to move the school forward. The learning environment has been enhanced and the school's positive and calm atmosphere creates a purposeful climate for learning. Expectations and aspirations have been raised. Good care, guidance and support and effective classroom support from teachers, teaching assistants and specialist intervention teachers support the needs of all pupils including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities well.

Pupils leave the school at the end of Key Stage 2 with broadly average attainment, though a smaller than average proportion exceeds the level expected for their age. Progress is satisfactory and increasingly good where teaching is consistently good. Pupils' attainment and progress in English is improving because of the continuing focus on a whole-school systematic language development programme, a new guided reading initiative and well targeted reading interventions. Good teamwork has ensured that new initiatives and appropriate interventions have been embedded quickly and evidence of their impact has already been evaluated. The school is fully aware of the need to continue to raise attainment and to accelerate the progress all pupils make, particularly in English. Leaders are striving to ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently good. They recognise the need to develop teachers' questioning skills so that they are able to assess accurately how

well pupils are learning during lessons They are aware too, of the need to share best practice and that teachers need to consistently plan and provide learning activities which meet the precise needs of all pupils. Marking is regular and encouraging but does not always give clear guidance to pupils on how to improve their work.

The calm and purposeful leadership of the recently appointed headteacher sets a clear direction for school improvement. This is based upon creating successful and confident learners who are also responsible citizens and through creating a sense of 'mutual respect within the school community'. Improvements since the last inspection and the school's accurate self-evaluation of its effectiveness show the school's capacity is satisfactory and the school is suitably placed to continue to improve.

About 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils exceeding age-related expectations by:
 - sharing best practice in teaching and learning to ensure the quality of teaching is consistently good or better
 - making more effective use of assessment information to plan activities which meet the precise learning needs of all pupils
 - making greater use of observations and questioning during lessons to check on pupils' understanding and reshape activities to accelerate their progress
 - ensuring all pupils know how to improve their work further.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils enter the school with a range of skills and abilities that are well below age-related expectations. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Progress in Key Stage 1 and 2 is satisfactory and good where pupils receive consistently good teaching. The introduction of a systematic whole-school language development programme has led to rapid gains in pupils' basic skills including their ability to use letters and sounds in their reading and their handwriting. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have benefited from this programme, because their needs are identified and supported appropriately.

Raising attainment strategies are proving effective. Inspection evidence, including lesson observations, work in pupils' books and an analysis of school data indicate that the school is now meeting its targets. Attainment in the national tests at Key Stage 2 improved significantly in 2011 and is now broadly average. As expected, however, Key Stage 1 results dipped in reading, writing and mathematics. The school knows more work is needed to ensure that all pupils continue to reach or exceed age-related expectations and to narrow the gap between attainment in English and mathematics, boys and girls, and pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.

Pupils report that they are enthusiastic about the changes in their school and that they feel safe. Any reported incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively by the school. Behaviour is good and has improved as a result of the recently introduced systems of rewards and consequences. Pupils demonstrate a satisfactory level of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They concentrate well in lessons and take great pride in their work. The school has put significant emphasis on attendance and this is currently satisfactory. Pupils play an appropriate role in their school. There is a strong sense of community and increasing opportunities for pupils to contribute to the wider community. Pupils understand what constitutes healthy eating and readily participate in a range of sporting activities before and after school. Satisfactory personal development, academic outcomes and attendance mean that pupils are adequately prepared for the next stage of their education.

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	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Although teaching remains satisfactory overall, there are clear signs that it has improved since the last inspection and that this has had a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress. Targeted staff development has enhanced teachers and teaching assistants' skills and confidence. The proportion of good and better teaching has increased significantly. Previous inadequate teaching has been eradicated. This is confirmed by the school's and the local authority's own monitoring. Planning builds on previous learning and is informed by accurate assessment information. This means that work is generally matched well to pupils' levels of ability. It also means that any gaps in pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding, for example, in the use of letters and sounds in reading, are being addressed. In the best lessons, adults make effective use of their observations and questions to ensure pupils' learning is checked regularly and activities are continually adapted to meet their needs. When questioning and the information from the monitoring of pupils' work is not used well enough to plan lessons or amend activities as lessons proceed, the pace of learning slows and progress remains satisfactory rather than good. Marking is regular,

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

detailed and encouraging. There are examples of good practice, but marking does not consistently give clear guidance to pupils on how to improve their work.

The school now provides a satisfactory curriculum which meets statutory requirements, including for the teaching of religious education. A detailed review of the curriculum has taken place and well chosen up-to-date resources are being used to stimulate learning. The new curriculum provides a broad range of cross-curricular experiences. It has been enhanced by numerous extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities. This includes visits out of school and the use of visitors to school. These have had a positive effect on pupils’ attitudes to learning. They are interested in and enthused by the new curriculum. Pupils have responded positively to the opportunities to work collaboratively and increasingly independently as well as to use their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across a range of subjects. Good emphasis is being placed on the development of thinking and writing skills across the thematic curriculum.

The good levels of care, support and guidance provided for all pupils and particularly for the potentially most vulnerable, are strengths of the school. Following the last inspection, academic support has improved considerably. Accurate assessment and careful tracking of individual pupils’ progress enable underachievement to be identified and appropriate interventions to be triggered. Inspection evidence confirms that the use of specialist interventions to narrow the gap in younger pupils’ reading and older pupils’ comprehension skills are proving particularly effective.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The newly appointed headteacher is building on the school’s improvements. Expectations and aspirations have been raised. She has established a clear vision for the school and a shared determination for further improvement. The very calm and attractive school environment creates a purposeful climate for learning and a common sense of purpose. There are good systems in place to check on the progress of pupils, monitor the quality of teaching and learning and hold teachers to account.

Subject leaders are now fully involved in monitoring and self-evaluation. Consequently, leadership and management at all levels accurately identify strengths and weaknesses and the school knows where its priorities for action lie. Regular monitoring of teaching and the curriculum, staff development and support from another school and the local authority have been particularly effective in improving the proportion of pupils reaching age-related expectations and the quality of teaching and assessment since the last inspection. However, there is still some variation across the school.

The school is a cohesive community. Parents and carers are better informed and readily support their children with homework and reading. Developing partnerships with a range of local agencies are being used to enhance the curriculum and provide targeted support for the potentially most vulnerable pupils. Members of the school council have been instrumental in taking decisions about how to improve their school and have been actively involved in tree-planting to improve the local environment.

The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory. Governors are well informed, supportive and fully involved in the life of the school. Training and support have allowed them to have a better understanding of their role in holding the school to account and tackling its areas of weakness. Statutory responsibilities, including for the curriculum, are now met and safeguarding arrangements are good. The school meets all the requirements for child protection, health and safety, and risk assessment. It has clear policies and procedures in relation to equality and discrimination, which are satisfactorily promoted. The school has satisfactory plans to promote community cohesion.

Improvements made to the areas of weakness since the last report and to pupils' outcomes demonstrate the school has the capacity to sustain further improvement and that it provides satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for the 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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children enter school with a range of skills and abilities which are well below those expected for their age. There are particular weaknesses in language and communication and children's knowledge and understanding of the world. The progress children make in their learning and development is good. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are identified and appropriate support is provided. For example, screening for speech and language difficulties, at the start of the year, ensures children get the help they need from a speech therapist.

At the time of the inspection, children were relatively new to the school. They are happy, well cared for and enjoy what they are doing. Children gain confidence quickly, have well established routines and learn and play well together. There are good relationships between the children and the adults who care for them.

The quality of provision has improved since the last inspection. Children are actively engaged in a motivating learning environment with continuous provision of activities in the classroom and outside. A regular programme is in place to teach children how to link letters and sounds. Planning covers all the required areas of learning and allows adults to interact with children, extend their skills and help them make good progress in their learning and development. There are good opportunities for children to initiate their own play-related learning. For example, during the inspection, they worked as Santa’s elves, running the toy factory and wrapping the presents for him to deliver. Accurate assessment and detailed tracking of children’s progress means children can receive focused help with their learning. ‘Learning journey’ folders are used to build up a good picture of children’s achievements. The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good.

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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parent and carer questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

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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.



12 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Castleway Primary School, Wirral CH46 1RN

Congratulations! Your school no longer requires special measures. It is much improved and now provides you with a satisfactory education. The school takes good care of you and you get the help and support you need to help you learn. This is because teaching and the curriculum are much better than when inspectors came to the school in April 2010. Getting a school out of special measures takes a great deal of hard work. Well done to your governors, headteacher, teachers and teaching assistants too! You are all now making better progress in English and reaching the standards that other pupils in other schools do in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2. This is because teachers and teaching assistants have made learning more interesting and worked hard to keep track of how well you are doing.

To help your school become even better I have asked governors and staff to continue to ensure you do as well as you can in your learning. I agreed with the school that this should be done by:

- ensuring teachers share what they do well with each other
- asking teachers to use the information they collect, on how well you are doing, to plan activities that will help you learn even more
- asking teachers to check more carefully how well you are learning in lessons to ensure you all do as well as you can
- asking teachers to tell you exactly how you can improve your work.

You should be proud of the part you have played in helping to improve your school. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Angela Milner
Her Majesty's Inspector

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Devonshire Park Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104991
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	377154
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Nigel Cromey-Hawke

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	413
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Kearney
Headteacher	Jillian Billinge
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2007
School address	Temple Road Birkenhead CH42 9JX
Telephone number	0151 6089243
Fax number	0151 6087964
Email address	headteacher@devonshirepark.wirral.sch.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 20 lessons in all classes taught by 18 teachers. They also held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils, and parents and carers. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including development planning, safeguarding arrangements, self-evaluation records, policies and performance data. Questionnaires from 64 parents and carers, 94 pupils and 22 staff were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- What the school is doing to raise attainment and achievement in mathematics.
- How challenging teaching is, especially for the more-able pupils.
- How well the newly-appointed subject leaders monitor the school's performance and devise suitable plans for driving forward improvement.

Information about the school

Most pupils in this larger-than-average-sized primary school are White British, with very few who speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, especially those with a statement of special educational needs. Provision for these pupils is within three specialist resource bases for language and communication and for behaviour, which also take pupils from other local schools. The school operates its own before- and after-school club. The school has seen significant staffing changes over the last two years. The school has a number of awards, including National Healthy School Status, the Basic Skills Award and the Activemark.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It has some outstanding features and makes a considerable difference to the lives of the young people in its care. It has maintained its excellent partnership working since the last inspection and improved its levels of care, guidance and support for all pupils to be outstanding. The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire were highly supportive of all aspects of its work.

Despite significant changes in staffing, the school has moved forward strongly since the last inspection. Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage because of the good teaching, leadership, curriculum and care. Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 also make good progress from their starting points, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those within the specialist resource bases. Considerable work has been undertaken to improve attainment in mathematics, and for boys, with noticeable success. Pupils' attainment overall when they leave Year 6 is broadly average but rising strongly and securely. Achievement is therefore good.

Teaching is good overall, with some that is outstanding, especially in the use of assessment to devise suitable activities to meet pupils' needs. There are very few weaker lessons which, while satisfactory, do not always give pupils sufficient challenge, particularly the more able. In these lessons teachers do not take every opportunity to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills or their independent learning. The curriculum is good, especially in its promotion of pupils' understanding of what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle. Pastoral support for all groups of pupils is excellent, reflecting the levels of care across the school. Most pupils clearly enjoy their time in school, behaviour is good and pupils say they feel valued and safe.

The senior leaders and managers provide good direction for the school and are well informed by their self-evaluation practices about its strengths and weaknesses. Due to recent staffing changes the monitoring role of subject leaders is not yet fully developed and the sharpness of their improvement planning varies. The governing body is active in challenging the school and supporting its drive for improvement. Actions to overcome weakness in the school's provision have been concerted and effective and, as such, its capacity for sustained improvement and its value for money are both good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment and achievement in all areas of learning by ensuring that the quality of teaching is at least consistently good in all lessons, by:
 - further developing pupils' speaking and listening skills, especially in lower Key Stage 2, so that pupils are able to learn effectively from adults and each other
 - providing sufficient challenge within lessons, especially for the more-able pupils
 - limiting the amount of teacher direction within lessons and promoting more effective independent learning by allowing pupils to demonstrate their understanding without adult support.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that newly-appointed subject leaders are fully supported in their training and able to monitor the quality of provision in their areas as effectively as possible
 - sharpening the focus of development planning to make clear what needs to be done and how it will be measured accurately to bring about improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Achievement and enjoyment is good. Children enter the school with low levels of basic skills compared with those typical for their age, especially in language. Learning is good in the majority of lessons, with pupils fully engaged as a result of good and, sometimes, outstanding teaching. Most pupils acquire new knowledge, develop their understanding and learn new skills well. Pupils clearly enjoy the vast majority of their learning, as where, for example, group work within one English lesson produced animated, humorous and high level responses from the pupils as they explained how to construct their factual writing.

Attainment on leaving the school in Year 6 has varied in the past, with standards in English being stronger than in mathematics. Boys have sometimes performed less well than girls. These differences have been significantly reduced over the last year as staffing has been stabilised, a focused programme of support and challenge put in place and aspects of the curriculum revised. Attainment is now securely broadly average across the school. The vast majority of pupils now make at least good progress from their starting points, with many making accelerated progress in upper Key Stage 2, especially in English. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress because of the additional support they receive. Some of these pupils make very good progress, notably those in the specialist resource-based provision.

The school is a warm and harmonious community. Behaviour is often excellent in the best lessons but is good overall due to some low-level unrest in a few other lessons. Attendance is broadly average but improving strongly. The progress pupils make in developing the key skills in literacy and numeracy is good, often from low starting

points. Pupils’ knowledge and use of information and communication technology is above average. Pupils make a good contribution to the daily running of the school, reflecting the school’s considerable work currently towards an award for respecting pupils’ rights. There is an active school council, many pupils act as trained playground buddies to support each other. Involvement in the local community is strong, particularly through links with the local church. The school makes considerable efforts to promote pupils’ wider understanding of the world through the curriculum and to develop their personal qualities. Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, being especially strong in the arts and sport. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their learning.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	3
Pupils’ attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

In the better lessons, good planning, well-informed by assessment data, ensures that varied and often practical activities are provided that meet the needs of most pupils. Teaching assistants and other adult helpers are used well in these lessons to support pupils’ learning. Individual learning targets are used with all pupils to help them focus upon what needs to be done to achieve well. These are regularly reviewed and updated and are contributing to raised expectations and better support for pupils in the better lessons. In the few weaker lessons, assessment has not been used well enough to provide sufficient challenge, especially for the more-able pupils. Pupils are not always given sufficient opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills or to work independently and to demonstrate their understanding without adult support.

The school has been involved in a creative curriculum project for some years, with a specific focus upon both literacy and numeracy skills, but also upon the development of pupils’ understanding of the wider world. This understanding comes through well-planned themed units of work which make learning interesting and relevant. This approach makes very good use of information and communication technology to link

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

pupils to other schools around the country and extend their learning. A major review of curriculum provision within mathematics and in support of boys' learning has begun to improve these areas. A good programme of visits and visitors enriches pupils' experiences and there is a good range of additional clubs and activities that are well supported by all groups of pupils.

The success of the school's care, guidance and support is seen in the often excellent progress pupils make in developing their personal skills by the time they leave the school. The school works extremely well at all levels with families, pupils and a wide range of outside agencies to identify and then sustain the often complex learning needs of its pupils. The good provision within the resource-based classes then ensures that these needs are well met. An extensive programme of family learning is also provided to meet the needs of parents and carers and the local community. Transition arrangements into and out of the school are of a high quality, reflecting the excellent partnership working of the school. The before- and after-school club is well attended and extends the pupils' learning very well through structured activity sessions. Attendance is monitored very well and is improving rapidly, with the levels of persistent absenteeism now less than half that of similar schools. Support for pupils on long-term absence is also considerable and helps minimise the disruption to their learning.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The experienced headteacher has a clear vision for the school and is driving forward improvement with energy and skill. She is supported by an enthusiastic and hard-working staff. Due to changes in staffing many of the current subject leaders are newly in post, and the school has identified that it still has work to do in consolidating the monitoring role of this group and sharpening their individual plans for improvement. Nevertheless, the school has an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses and good whole-school plans in place for driving further improvement. The effective governing body has a good understanding of the school and is active in providing it with both support and challenge. Governor links to classes and subject areas are currently being further developed.

Safeguarding requirements are fully met and the school demonstrates good practice in site security and staff training. Engagement with parents and carers is good, often making effective use of the school's website and links with local children's centres. The school's partnership working is excellent, bringing capacity to the school it would not otherwise have, for example, in the arts, for gifted and able pupils and in supporting pupils who may be vulnerable due to their circumstances. The school has

carried out an audit of its social, ethnic and religious context and has in place a good range of planned actions to support community cohesion. This is good overall, being well supported by links to cultures and ways of life of a very different kind to that of the school, for example, schools in Eastern Europe. The promotion of equal opportunities is good, with gaps in pupils' performance rapidly closing. Discrimination is extremely rare and when encountered is dealt with very well.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Adults ensure that children and their parents and carers receive a warm welcome to the school. Children settle happily in the safe and stimulating environment. There is a strong focus upon developing language skills and the establishment of clear routines and expectations that help children's learning and personal development. Children's learning is well recorded and this information used to inform the next stage in their learning. Parents and carers are kept well informed about their children's progress and interests. Children make good progress across all areas of learning because of the good and sometimes outstanding teaching in an environment which caters well for their needs. Some children make outstanding progress, especially in their social development. Behaviour is good. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress because of the additional support they receive. A real strength of the school's provision is the way teachers plan a very good range of activities to meet children's needs. There is a very good balance between activities that teachers direct and those chosen by the children. The outdoor area is somewhat restricted due to site limitations but is used well by the school to support children's learning.

Leadership and management are good. The recently appointed leader is building a talented team which is providing good, and in some cases, exemplary provision for the children in its care. Further developments of the assessment practices are currently being made to better record children's progress across all areas of learning. Staff training is up to date, welfare requirements are fully met and there are good plans in place for bringing about further improvement.

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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The response rate from parents and carers to the Ofsted questionnaire was much lower than that normally seen. Those who returned the inspection questionnaire are very happy with most aspects of the school’s work. They consider it provides a safe and caring environment for their children and that it is well led and managed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Devonshire Park 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 inspection team received 64 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 413 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	63	23	36	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	42	66	21	33	0	0	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	35	55	26	41	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	37	58	25	39	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	44	69	18	28	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	42	66	19	30	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	53	28	44	0	0	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)	30	47	28	44	1	2	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	64	21	33	0	0	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	58	23	36	2	3	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	55	23	36	3	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	44	69	16	25	3	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	48	75	12	19	1	2	1	2

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



5 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Devonshire Park Primary School, Birkenhead, CH42 9JX

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school recently. You were very friendly and polite, and enthusiastic about what you do.

Devonshire Park is a good school. It has some outstanding features. You make good progress throughout the school as a result of the good teaching and the subjects that you cover in lessons. Those of you who find learning difficult also make good progress because of the excellent care, guidance and support provided by the school, especially in the specialist small classes. Your behaviour is good and you are involved well in the daily life of the school. Well done! You say you feel safe and highly valued within the school. You have a good understanding of what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle and you take plenty of exercise. The school works extremely well with outside partners to provide lots of sport for you to enjoy. Your attendance is average, but improving strongly. To help the school to improve we have asked your headteacher and teachers to:

- improve the small number of satisfactory lessons so that all the teaching is at least good
- ensure that staff in new positions within the school are fully supported and that their planning to help move the school forward is sufficiently detailed.

You can all help by telling your teachers how best you learn and if your work is too hard or too easy. Also, please make sure you all come to school as often as possible. I wish you the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Cromey-Hawke
Lead inspector

Kingsway Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104997
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	377157
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Elaine Murray HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	85
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S Lothian-Evans
Headteacher	Miss F Foster
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2008
School address	Ashville Road Wallasey CH44 9EF
Telephone number	0151 638 5195
Fax number	0151 638 9820
Email address	schooloffice@kingsway.wirral.sch.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. They observed five teachers during 9 lessons. Inspectors met formally with a small group of parents and carers, members of the governing body, members of staff and pupils. They scrutinised a wide range of documentation including development plans, management reports, all safeguarding and other policies, pupils' records and the school's data on pupils' progress. In addition, they read 14 questionnaires completed by parents and carers as well as 10 staff and 32 pupils' questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The impact of systems for improving the quality of teaching on pupils' progress.
- The level of progress and challenge for pupils.
- Whether attainment in reading and science has been sustained.
- Progress in improving provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The impact of improvements to governance.

Information about the school

Kingsway Primary is a smaller than average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. Almost all of the pupils are of White British heritage. A small minority speak English as an additional language. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision consists of a part-time Nursery which provides morning places for children aged three and four and a full-time Reception class for the older four- and five-year-olds. The school has achieved a number of national and local awards, including the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Artsmark, an Eco Silver Award and an Inclusion Mark awarded by the local authority.

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

2

Main findings

Kingsway Primary school provides a satisfactory standard of education. Some aspects of its work are good. Under the dedicated and enthusiastic leadership of the head teacher, the school has developed a welcoming and inclusive community in which all are respected. The school is well-respected in the community because of the success of the school leaders in strengthening parental engagement, partnerships and community cohesion. Consequently, these aspects are good. Parents and carers appreciate the good-quality care and support provided by the school.

The small number of pupils in each year group and variation in the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and or disabilities mean that standards can fluctuate from year to year. Children enter Nursery with skills and understanding that vary, but are usually below those expected for their age. The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics in most years has been significantly below average. However, since the last inspection improvements to teaching have accelerated progress in lessons with the result that standards are rising. In 2010 for the first time in recent years, the school attained average results in the national tests for eleven-year-olds. Although attainment dipped with the small cohort of 2011, currently progress in lessons is good and attainment of pupils in Year 6 is now in line with national expectations. The quality of teaching has improved, and as a result good learning is characteristic of most lessons. There has not been time for these improvements to become evident in progress over time. Hence learning and progress are judged as satisfactory. Good teaching and an improved, good-quality curriculum ensure that pupils are fully-engaged in most lessons. Where lessons are satisfactory, teaching is not as effective in meeting the needs of the differing ages and abilities within the class, with the result that the progress they make is slower than in other lessons. Pupils behave well and are welcoming to visitors. They are proud of their school and their good level of involvement through the school council and other roles of responsibility. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and are confident that any concerns or issues they raise will be dealt with promptly and effectively by the school.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a satisfactory start to their education. They make satisfactory progress overall, but make good progress in early reading skills. Children's learning has been enhanced by improvements to provision in the outdoor area. However, learning from children's self-chosen activities is not

maximised as aspects of the indoor learning environment are not sufficiently stimulating or inviting.

The school is led and managed well. The senior leadership team has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of provision. Governors provide an appropriate level of support and challenge. Systems for safeguarding pupils are satisfactory. While statutory requirements are met, the monitoring of some risk assessments requires a greater degree of rigour. School leaders have worked well to bring about improvements and have been supported by the local authority in doing so. The school demonstrates a good capacity for sustained improvement. Action to raise attainment in reading and science by the end of Key Stage 2 has been effective. The quality of teaching has improved to be good, and a creative curriculum is effective in ensuring pupils' engagement and motivation in their learning. Robust systems are in place to monitor pupils' progress in learning and identify where further support or intervention are needed. This has been effective in ensuring that most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make at least satisfactory progress. Improvements have been made to governance which is now satisfactory. The school has been conspicuously successful in raising the attendance level from a low level at the time of the last inspection to its current high level. These improvements have led to some improved outcomes for pupils, but the full impact has yet to be realised in raising pupils' achievement.

Up to 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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the governing body refines practice in monitoring risk assessments, enabling issues to be identified promptly and resolved effectively.
- Improve progress and attainment by ensuring that all teaching is closely-matched to pupils' learning needs and provides sufficient challenge for the more able.
- Improve learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage by enhancing the learning environment further to provide more stimulating opportunities for children's self-initiated learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school, and this is reflected in parents', carers' and pupils' questionnaires. Pupils say that lessons are fun and interesting. In the majority of lessons pupils engage well and are motivated to learn. They behave well and this has a positive impact on the quality of their learning. Concerted effort by the school to raise attainment in reading has borne fruit. From very low levels in 2009, attainment in reading at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is now average. Teacher assessments show that attainment in science has improved to

average levels. Pupils' high level of attendance contributes positively to their progress in learning. Most pupils develop satisfactory basic skills in mathematics, English and information and communication technology (ICT) that will contribute to their next stage of education.

Pupils are interested in the school's work to promote healthy lifestyles. They have a good awareness of the importance of healthy eating. They are active in the playground and in physical education sessions. Pupils enjoy roles of responsibility such as librarians and members of the school council. Pupils take an active part in making decisions, for example, about how the school meals should be changed to make them more varied and healthy. They contribute positively to their local community as, for example, they take part in tree-planting, and participate in services at local churches. Pupils show good development of social skills as they co-operate well together in lessons, for example to work in groups to share ideas and cook Chinese food. Relationships are positive and harmonious. Children develop a good understanding of the variety of cultures and faiths beyond their own.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	3
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	
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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:	1
Pupils' attendance ¹	
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The majority of teaching is good. In good lessons the pace of learning is brisk, tasks appropriately challenging and teachers use questions to extend pupils' thinking. Pupils are involved in much active learning, which increases their motivation and engagement. For example, Key Stage 2 pupils were effectively engaged in a writing activity based around a story book, following their involvement in role-play relating to the story the previous day. Teachers ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of what they are expected to do and achieve in lessons. In a minority of lessons tasks provide insufficient challenge for more-able pupils, and the needs of younger and less-able pupils are not fully met. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for pupils with special educational needs/and or disabilities. The marking of pupils' work is thorough and gives them clear advice on how to improve their work.

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

The recently-developed creative curriculum is designed to meet children’s needs and interests. The curriculum emphasises the use of direct experience and active learning and has a positive impact on pupils’ motivation for learning. Pupils have good opportunities to practise their basic literacy and numeracy skills. Links are made between subjects. For example, when learning about China, pupils made Chinese food, and then evaluated this and designed their own recipe. The curriculum is significantly enriched through a broad range of trips in the locality, visiting specialist French and violin teachers, and trips to France and Spain for older pupils. This provides pupils with a wealth of experiences which positively develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The school provides a good level of care, guidance and support for pupils. High priority is given to ensuring effective care and well-being of all pupils. The school works effectively with a range of agencies to support pupils whose circumstances may have made them vulnerable. In some case pupils have been helped to overcome significant barriers to their education.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher communicates a high drive and commitment to improve the education of the pupils in the school’s care, which is effectively shared with staff. Effective systems to monitor the quality of teaching have led to good improvement in this area. Subject leaders are confident in their roles and have begun to contribute to staff professional development. The headteacher and her deputy effectively monitor and assess progress and put in place interventions which are effective in ensuring that pupils at risk of underachievement make satisfactory progress. Development-planning is targeted at the key areas for improvement and is effectively monitored. The governing body is supportive of the school and is confident to question and challenge. All safeguarding procedures are in place and meet current requirements ensuring that staff are appropriately checked for their suitability to work with children. The monitoring of some aspects of risk assessment is insufficiently rigorous.

The school has established positive partnerships with parents and carers. They are effectively encouraged to be involved in their children’s learning. The provision of courses for parents and carers such as those for family learning and ICT helps them to do so. Partnership-working with a broad range of partners is effective in providing support for children with special educational needs and /or disabilities and providing valuable experiences to enrich the curriculum. For example links with a local ICT college have involved pupils visiting the college and teachers from the college providing lessons in school. These positive partnerships make a good contribution to pupils’ achievement and well-being.

The school contributes well to community cohesion through its links with local churches and the community. The school works well to promote equality of opportunity with the result that there are very few differences between the outcomes of different groups within the school.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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 in the Nursery and Reception class are happy and well-behaved. They quickly learn the daily routines, settle well and are able to work independently. Children make satisfactory progress and are often working within the expectations for their age by the end of Reception year. Children have access to a balance of adult-led and self-chosen activities. They thoroughly enjoyed exploring porridge with their hands and making their own porridge as part of their focus on the 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' story. They are effectively encouraged to think and develop vocabulary. Children show good progress in learning to blend three-letter words and are making good attempts to write to communicate meaning.

Children show confidence in selecting their own activities. However the activities provided and some areas of the indoor provision such as the mark-making and reading areas, are not sufficiently stimulating to ensure learning is promoted to best effect.

The work of the Early Years Foundation Stage is evaluated satisfactorily and the current leader has a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of provision. Positive relationships with parents and carers contribute to children's well being and progress.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	3
Taking into account:	3
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The rate of response to the questionnaires was low. A very large majority of those who responded are happy with their children's experience at school. A very small number of questionnaires had negative comments which were discussed with the headteacher. The inspector spoke to a small number of parents and carers at a meeting. They were very positive about the work of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Kingsway 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 14 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 85 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	7	50	6	43	0	0	1	7
The school keeps my child safe	8	57	5	36	0	0	1	7
The school informs me about my child's progress	7	50	6	43	1	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	8	57	5	36	1	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	9	64	4	29	0	0	1	7
The school helps me to support my child's learning	8	57	5	36	0	0	1	7
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	7	50	5	36	1	7	1	7
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)	5	36	6	43	0	0	1	7
The school meets my child's particular needs	7	50	5	36	1	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	5	36	5	36	1	7	1	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	5	36	8	57	0	0	1	7
The school is led and managed effectively	4	29	9	64	0	0	1	7
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	9	64	4	29	0	0	1	7

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add up exactly to 100. Sixth-form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Kingsway Primary School, Wallasey CH44 9EF

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited to carry out your inspection. This letter is to tell you what we found.

We judged your school to be providing you with a satisfactory quality of education. We were impressed by your good behaviour and how helpful and sensible you were when you answered our questions. You are very keen to learn and enjoy coming to your school. We were very pleased to see that so many of you come to school every day. Your school gives you opportunities to do interesting things such as cookery, violin lessons, and regular trips. Your teachers work hard to make your lessons interesting and this is one of the reasons you enjoy school. Your school has made sure that you are getting better at reading, in particular. You told us that you feel safe in school and that you enjoy your school council and monitor jobs.

In order to help you do even better we have asked the school to make some improvements to the teaching in a few of your lessons. We want the teachers to make sure they always plan work that is just at the right level for each of you. This will help you to learn even faster. Your school keeps you safe. We have asked the governors of the school to make sure that they are even better at doing this. We have also asked the school to make sure that the Reception and Nursery classroom is made an even more interesting place for children to learn.

You can help your teachers by always trying your very best. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Elaine Murray
Her Majesty's Inspector

Thornton Hough Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105015
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	377160
Inspection dates	6–7 December 2011
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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	161
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Booth
Headteacher	Alison Kershaw
Date of previous school inspection	10 January 2007
School address	St George's Way Thornton Hough Wirral CH63 1JJ
Telephone number	0151 3363427
Fax number	0151 3363947
Email address	schooloffice@thorntonhough.wirral.sch.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and observed nine teachers in their classrooms. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils and parents and carers. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including pupils' progress and attainment data, the school's planning documents, policies, procedures and records and documentation related to safeguarding pupils. They reviewed information provided by parents and carers in 62 completed questionnaires. They also took into account the views pupils in Key Stage 2 and staff expressed in the questionnaires they returned.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress made by more-able pupils in Key Stage 1.
- The effectiveness and impact of leaders and managers at all levels in ensuring brisk rates of progress for all learners.
- The impact of leadership in ensuring consistency in the quality of teaching across the school, with particular reference to Key Stage 1.

Information about the school

The school is slightly smaller than most other primary schools, although it has increased in size since its last inspection. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below that usually found. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a very small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Since its previous inspection the school has renewed its Healthy School status. It has also gained the Activemark. Before-and after-school care clubs are provided on site by an independent company. These provisions are subject to separate inspection by Ofsted and reports are available on the Ofsted website.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school. Very effective leadership has ensured continuous and ongoing improvements, enabling the school to sustain and build on its history of high achievement. Pupils thrive in an environment where every child is known, cared for and valued, and this is helping them to achieve excellence in both their personal and their academic development.

Most children join the Reception class with the level of skills that are expected for their age. From a flying start in the extremely effective Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils go on to reach high levels of attainment by the end of Year 6. This has been a consistent picture for the last five years.

The high overall quality of provision, including excellent teaching and a vibrant curriculum, is a key contributory factor to pupils' outstanding achievement. Pastoral care is excellent, relationships are very supportive and the school has a well-developed family ethos. Pupils told the inspection team that, 'All the staff care about us; they keep us safe and are always kind.' The school is highly inclusive and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are enabled to make the same excellent progress as their peers. Partnerships with local secondary schools and with the nearby City Learning Centre are exceptionally strong and contribute significantly to enhancing provision in the school in technology, music, modern foreign languages and many other areas of the curriculum.

The headteacher provides clearly-focused strategic leadership. Supported by an effective deputy headteacher, she has created a very strong team ethos, with a clear focus on continuous school improvement. Very effective subject leaders contribute strongly to taking the school forward. Leaders are not complacent. The school usually measures success against highly aspirational targets. Areas for development and improvement are clearly and correctly identified and the school takes appropriate actions to address them. For example, although the vast majority of pupils reached the nationally expected levels at the end of Year 2 in 2011, the proportion reaching the higher levels was only average. The school was not satisfied with this, recognizing that it did not match the substantial proportion reaching the higher levels at the end of Key Stage 2. This issue has been addressed very decisively in the current year by strengthening provision in Key Stage 1 and by close monitoring of outcomes for more-able pupils. Although this is still a work in progress, early signs of improvement are already apparent and inspection evidence shows

pupils are making excellent progress in Key Stage 1 and in Year 3. Extremely accurate self-evaluation is based on systematic monitoring and rigorous assessment, with a clear analysis of need and outcomes. All these factors, together with the very many skills and talents of staff and leaders, including an extremely knowledgeable and effective governing body, combine to demonstrate that the school has outstanding capacity to continue to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the percentage of pupils in Key Stage 1 that attain above the average level by the end of 2012, to match the proportion that attain highly at the end of Year 6 by more rigorously monitoring pupils' progress against clearly defined targets for improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils' attitudes to school are extremely positive. They are responsive learners, interested and absorbed in lessons, eager to offer their ideas in discussions, reflective and articulate. They collaborate productively when working with a partner or in a group. They listen carefully and see tasks through to completion and they are increasingly able to evaluate the quality of their own work with accuracy. Across the school, attainment is high. Evidence from assessment data for the last school year confirmed that progress was outstanding. Lesson observations and scrutiny of work in pupils' books all confirmed that pupils across the school, including more-able pupils in Key Stage 1, are progressing at a brisk rate in the current term. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress, as a result of the very well-targeted support the school provides for them. Pupils' overall achievement is excellent and this is matched by their interest and enjoyment in learning.

Pupils show an excellent understanding of issues around personal safety. They form very good relationships with each other and with the adults in school and they say they are confident help is on hand if they encounter any problems. Pupils and parents and carers strongly agree that school is a place of safety. Pupils participate enthusiastically in the range of activities provided to support their health, fitness and well-being. They enjoy taking responsibility, for example, as influential school councillors. They are enthusiastic fundraisers for charities at home and abroad. All of this, together with their excellent basic skills, contributes extremely well to preparing them for the next stages in their education. Pupils show a mature understanding of the sound moral values the school promotes and this is reflected in their excellent behaviour and considerate attitudes. Attendance is good overall, with a further rise this term resulting from the school's ongoing drive for improvement.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

The excellent quality of teaching is contributing very strongly to pupils' learning and progress and to their personal development. Lessons are planned very well to take the range of learners' needs into account and the pace of learning is brisk; this is helping pupils to progress very well in lessons. Imaginative teaching strategies are often used to very good effect, bringing learning alive for pupils. This was the case, for example, in a literacy lesson in Year 4, where pupils had the opportunity to develop their understanding of characters' motivation in the story they had been reading, through taking part in a range of role play activities. This allowed them to question and challenge characters directly, with pupils taking turns to go into role. High-quality oral and written work resulted, with pupils totally absorbed in exploring why characters had behaved as they did in the story and eager to express well-developed ideas in the writing session that followed.

Regular and very effective assessment means that class teachers have a clear overview of progress and this helps them identify pupils who may be underachieving and those who require extra support. Focused support is timely and effective. Well-trained and skilled teaching assistants work in professional partnership with class teachers and contribute extremely well to all pupils' learning and progress and particularly to that of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school's rich and varied curriculum is supported very well by very good provision for information and communication technology. The school uses the International Primary Curriculum to excellent effect, bringing subjects together in topics and themes that are interesting, relevant and engaging for pupils. Learning activities provide appropriate challenge for pupils of all abilities, including the more-able; this is equally the case in both key stages. The curriculum is exceptionally well enriched by opportunities for pupils to develop skills in sports, the arts, especially music, and three modern foreign languages. A range of visitors and visits, including several residential trips, contributes very effectively to promoting pupils' academic, personal, social, health and citizenship education. Well-chosen support strategies for pupils

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

with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensure they enjoy full access to learning and are included in everything on offer.

Pastoral care is excellent and the school works sensitively to support those pupils and their families whose circumstances potentially make them most vulnerable. This is helping to break down barriers to learning and progress that pupils occasionally encounter. Attendance and punctuality are promoted very effectively. Extremely effective links with several local secondary schools benefit pupils at transition to the next stage of their education and also contribute significantly to enriching the curriculum, with many examples of collaborative curriculum projects. The school works extremely well with a wide range of agencies that support pupils’ health, welfare, social and learning needs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Staff and the governing body wholeheartedly share the headteacher’s firm commitment to continuous improvement and her ambition to achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils. Staff at all levels, contribute very effectively to helping drive forward improvement initiatives. The school plans appropriate actions for ensuring that pupils’ high attainment is sustained and that their learning and progress are promoted very well. The information gained from regular and rigorous progress reviews is used extremely well to ensure appropriate levels of challenge and support in learning activities. Expectations are high and the use of individual learning targets is being developed very effectively. The school tracks the progress of more-able pupils in Key Stage 1, but has not yet set out a precise description of the improved attainment it expects from this group of pupils in the current year, against which to measure how well they are doing. The actively involved and exceptionally well-informed governing body challenges and holds the school to account very effectively. A programme of continuous professional development contributes strongly to the high quality of provision, to ensuring consistency in teaching quality across the school, including in Key Stage 1, and to very positive outcomes for pupils.

Parents and carers appreciate all that is done to support their children’s welfare. Pupils benefit from the very effective partnership between home and school, which is supported by excellent communications, including regular newsletters, workshops, meetings and questionnaires. The school complies well with statutory requirements for safeguarding, health and safety and child protection, through well-managed procedures and an ongoing review of their effectiveness. Its promotion of equal opportunities and access to educational entitlement is mostly effective: the school is very inclusive; discrimination in any form is not tolerated. Work to ensure high attainment for more-able pupils in Key Stage 1, to bring them in line with similar pupils across the school, is progressing well, but is still at an early stage. The school

contributes well to community cohesion through an extensive range of partnerships in and beyond the community, and through a range of developing international links. Partnerships with other schools, including schools within and beyond the local authority area, are particularly beneficial in helping to support pupil's personal and academic development. Partnerships with sports and music providers are very strong and contribute extremely well to pupils' cultural and skills development and to their health and fitness.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Reception class make excellent progress and develop very positive attitudes, becoming happy, interested learners. As a result, by the end of the year, most children are working above the expected levels for their age. All of the children, including the more-able, make excellent progress in relation to their starting points, because ongoing assessment is accurate, with the consequence that activities are extremely well matched to their individual learning needs. The quality of teaching is excellent and children are provided with an appropriate balance between activities they choose for themselves and those led by adults. This supports the development of independent learning skills very well. Assessment is informed by evidence gathered through observations of the children in their activities and staff use this information extremely well to help them plan the next steps in the children's learning. The setting is very effective in identifying and supporting children with additional learning needs.

Children interact well with each other and enjoy warm, trusting relationships with the caring staff; as a result, they grow in confidence, they are happy and secure and ready to learn. They settle quickly because induction procedures are sensitive and staff establish very positive relationships with parents and carers. Excellent communications keep them well informed about their children's learning and progress and excellent advice and guidance are provided on how to extend and support learning at home. The setting is led and managed extremely well and very effective team work contributes strongly to positive outcomes for the children. Provision is monitored regularly and this supports ongoing improvements. Procedures to ensure children's welfare are very good and meet all requirements.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	1
Taking into account:	1
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

All of those who responded to the questionnaire said they agree or strongly agree that they are happy with their children’s experience at the school. Parents and carers who met with a member of the inspection team commented on how eager their children are to come to school each day and on their confidence in the staff team. They remarked on the very good home-school communications, saying how they appreciate the fact that the school consults them regularly through questionnaires and meetings. Their comments indicated that parents and carers place a high value on the school’s caring ethos and that they feel they are very well informed about their children’s progress and attainment. In the questionnaire responses, a few parents and carers raised issues about behaviour management. Inspectors observed behaviour in classrooms and around the school, had discussions with staff and pupils and reviewed behavioural records. Their findings are in the report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thornton Hough 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 inspection team received 62 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 161 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	85	9	15	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	54	87	6	10	0	0	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	46	74	14	23	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	49	79	10	16	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	51	82	11	18	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	48	77	12	19	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	68	18	29	2	3	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)	45	73	14	23	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	44	71	16	26	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	41	66	15	24	5	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	55	23	37	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	51	82	11	18	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	52	84	10	16	0	0	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%.

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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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
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The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.
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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.



8 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thornton Hough Primary School, Wirral, CH63 1JJ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspectors 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. We enjoyed our visit very much and it was lovely to meet you all.

We found that Thornton Hough Primary is an outstanding school and that it is a very happy place for you to learn in and grow together. Your education gets off to an excellent start in the Reception class and you successfully maintain the positive attitudes to learning that you establish there as you move up through the school. You are extremely well behaved and polite young people. Your attendance is good and is continuing to improve. You work hard in your lessons, enjoy your work very much and get on very well with each other and with the grown-ups in school. They look after you extremely well. They work very hard, too, to make sure that you are provided with excellent teaching and a really interesting curriculum and you told us how much you enjoy your lessons. Because of all this, you are making excellent progress in your learning and your overall attainment is high.

This is something we have asked the school's leaders to do, because we think it will help to make your school even better.

- Make sure that more-able pupils in Key Stage 1 do as well as they possibly can, so that the proportion of Year 2 pupils who achieve Level 3 in assessments at the end of the summer term is at least above average in 2012.

You can help by continuing to do your best and by continuing to be happy learners.

With my very best wishes for the future,

Yours sincerely,

Diane Auton
Lead inspector

Sandbrook Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105003
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	377159
Inspection dates	18–19 January 2012
Lead inspector	Kevin Johnson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	166
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vida Wilson
Headteacher	Claire Temple
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2007
School address	Stavordale Road Moreton Wirral CH46 9PS
Telephone number	0151 6773231
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Email address	schooloffice@sandbrook.wirral.sch.uk



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Introduction

Inspection team

Kevin Johnson
John Evans

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 15 lessons or parts of lessons taught by eight teachers, talked to pupils and reviewed some of their work. Meetings were held with staff and members of the governing body. In addition, inspectors took account of 42 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, as well as those completed by pupils and staff members. There were no comments received via the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to aid in planning the inspection. Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, which included that relating to safeguarding, curriculum, the school's self-evaluation, governing body meetings, national assessment data and the school's assessments of pupils' progress.

Information about the school

Almost all pupils are White British in this smaller than average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. A broadly average proportion has special educational needs and there are a very small number of disabled pupils. The school has achieved Healthy School status and has gained both the Eco-Schools and International School awards. The government floor standards, which set minimum expectations for attainment, were not met in the previous academic year.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in September 2011.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory school. However, the impact of the headteacher’s and deputy headteacher’s leadership since their appointment is bringing about good improvement. Safeguarding procedures, pupils’ attendance and punctuality, teachers’ use of assessment and their accountability for pupils’ progress are some of the improvements which are strengthening the school’s performance.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enjoy their learning. They make satisfactory progress and most are working within expected levels by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress from Year 1 to Year 6. Currently, pupils’ attainment is average in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 and their achievement is satisfactory.
- Pupils behave well around the school and they feel safe. They are mindful of one another, courteous to adults and are strongly opposed to all kinds of bullying. Occasionally, in lessons, however, not all pupils are as attentive as they could be.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Some teaching is good but the school recognises that there are inconsistencies. In good lessons, expectations are high and pupils work at a good pace. Where teaching is satisfactory there is a lack of challenge and time is not always used productively.
- The curriculum satisfactorily promotes pupils’ achievement in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Opportunities for pupils to use these skills to improve their learning across all subjects are, however, not fully developed. Lesson activities planned as part of the curriculum are not always exciting enough to fully engage all pupils.
- Leaders and managers, including the governing body, share a clear vision for the school’s improvement and a very strong determination to succeed. Strategies for monitoring and evaluating the school’s work are good and are effectively moving the school forward.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure consistently good or better teaching throughout the school and thereby improve pupils' achievement by:
 - sharing best practice in teachers' use of assessment and marking effectively throughout the school
 - ensuring that higher-attaining pupils are always sufficiently challenged by their work
 - improving behaviour for learning for pupils who, on a few occasions, do not listen or apply themselves as well as others in lessons
 - planning and implementing more consistent whole school strategies for the teaching of phonics.
- Provide a more exciting curriculum for pupils by:
 - enabling middle managers to more actively monitor the quality in their subjects
 - planning more opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their knowledge and skills across different subjects and in different ways.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils are generally attentive in lessons and are eager to learn. Most work well with partners or in small groups, particularly when they see real purpose in what they do. Pupils in Year 6, for example worked with partners to assess their own writing. They applied themselves well because it gave them better understanding of their progress. Occasionally, however, groups of pupils are not as well engaged. This happens when they are not challenged enough or when indifferent attitudes to learning go unchecked. Both of these slow the pace of pupils' learning. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Pupils feel valued and know that there is no loss of self-esteem in asking for help. This makes them always willing to 'have a go'.

Pupils' attainment at Key Stage 2 is broadly average when taken over the last three years, although there was a significant dip in 2011 to below average. Due to decisive action taken by school leaders, particularly in improving assessment systems and checking pupils' progress, this has been reversed. Pupils' work and school assessments show that pupils in Year 6 are currently on track to reach expected attainment in English and mathematics. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is average in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils' year-on-year progress is gathering pace due to the newly introduced systems to regularly check their progress. Nevertheless, these systems are not fully embedded and there is still some unevenness in progress, which is consistent with the overall picture of teaching. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress from starting points that are below those typical for their age. This progress quickens in the Reception class, where children benefit from a full day in school and more varied learning opportunities. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well in the classroom. Their individual plans set clear and manageable targets for them and the additional support they receive ensures that they make their expected progress. Those disabled pupils are also

supported and cared for well. Sensitive and thoughtfully planned help means that their needs are met and they are enabled to make expected progress alongside their peers.

Attainment in reading is average at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and pupils make steady progress. Letters and the sound that they make are taught daily in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. The methods used by teachers in some of these sessions are limited and sometimes the pace is slow. There is no cohesive system which allows, for example, pupils of similar abilities across the age range, to be taught as groups, in order to challenge them more effectively. Pupils take reading books home regularly and are encouraged by parents and carers who hear them read and comment in the reading diaries. By the time pupils leave the school they are generally competent readers.

Parents and carers hold positive views about how the school helps their children to make progress and through their comments applaud particularly the individual support given to pupils.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and results in pupils' overall satisfactory progress. Some teaching is good, and this is evidence that newly introduced strategies, professional development, and a more rigorous approach to the use of assessment are raising teachers' expectations. In the good lessons, pupils learn at a good pace because they are all challenged, whatever their abilities, and know what is expected of them. Teachers monitor the work in progress effectively, questioning pupils, giving feedback and discussing their ideas. This builds good relationships and furthers the school's aim to promote 'positive mental attitudes'. Pupils are encouraged to help each other. For example, some Year 2 pupils became designated 'experts' in a literacy lesson so they could help others with their writing and spelling. Such activities make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Parents and carers have positive views about the quality of teaching and are particularly pleased about the support given to individual pupils.

This good practice is not evident throughout the school. Where teaching is satisfactory, it does not enable pupils to make their best progress. In these lessons, time is not used productively to motivate pupils and move their learning on. Indifferent attitudes to learning from a few pupils are not challenged promptly enough, and planned work does not take enough account of what higher-attaining pupils might be capable. A recent survey, which was followed up by a school council meeting, resulted in a clear message from pupils to teachers that they wanted 'more hands-on and more excitement' in some of their lessons. This has resulted in teachers identifying the need for a more creative approach to curriculum planning as one of their priorities. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, but the quality is inconsistent. Much of the marking celebrates what pupils achieve but does not say how they can improve. Homework is done regularly and boosts pupils' acquisition of basic skills.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are polite, well mannered and respectful towards one another. They typically behave well around the school. The vast majority work diligently in class. A very small number lack the necessary listening skills needed in lessons and are too easily distracted from their work. Pupils are proud to be Sandbrook pupils and contribute increasingly to the school's daily life. The school council is active in giving all pupils a say in school matters. Its members are

watchful guardians over school lunches to ensure healthy choices are available. There are already plans for school council members to write a play designed to promote sensible diets. Friendly links have been fostered with pupils from a nearby special school. A recently shared residential visit successfully improved pupils' understanding of others' needs and aspects of their spiritual moral social and cultural development. Through their International Schools work, communications with pupils in Germany are underway and developing links with a school in Liverpool also provide opportunities for pupils to compare cultural backgrounds and lifestyles.

Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. They are adamant that there is no bullying and that any kind of name-calling is rare. Pupils are fully confident that help is available from adults when it is needed. Parents and carers unanimously support their children's views about care and safety and consider behaviour in the school to be good. The headteacher very quickly changed some routines for the start of the school day, which have improved pupils' safety as well as their punctuality and attendance, which is average and improving steadily. Pupils have good awareness of potentially dangerous situations outside school and know how to keep themselves safe by avoiding pressure from others to make the wrong choices, for instance, on the internet and on the roads.

Leadership and management

The headteacher's leadership has had considerable impact on aspects of the school's work in need of improvement. Parents and carers have commented on the positive effect that the changes are having on their children's progress. With support from a knowledgeable and effective deputy headteacher and other senior leaders, self-evaluation has been swift, incisive and accurate. The leadership team has gained the full support of all staff members and, with the governing body, they work with drive and determination to build a successful school. The governing body acts upon good quality information from the school. Its clear ambition for the school's future drives its improved support and challenge, and its strong determination to hold the school to account. Given the success of measures already taken to halt the decline in attainment and bring about improvement, the school demonstrates a good capacity to improve further.

Leaders have set high standards with regard to teaching and learning. Monitoring of teaching by the headteacher is rigorous and, although further improvement is needed, the resulting professional development is beginning to show impact in classrooms. Teachers with responsibility for subjects other than English and mathematics understand their subjects' strengths and weaknesses. They do not, however, actively monitor the quality of learning, or promote improvements that would add interest and depth to the curriculum. The curriculum satisfactorily promotes pupils' achievement in literacy, numeracy and ICT. A relative weakness is the limited opportunities for pupils to use these skills to improve their learning across all subjects. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. While there are stronger elements, for example, in pupils' relationships and behaviour towards others, they do not gain a real sense of wonder from their learning. The school challenges all forms of discrimination and monitors progress and provision for pupils carefully to ensure that all have the opportunities they need to achieve their best. The governing body gives high priority to safeguarding pupils. The suitability of those who work in the school is appropriately checked and the safety of pupils and staff is an agenda item for all full governing body meetings. A member of the governing body who has appropriate experience oversees safeguarding matters.

Glossary

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.
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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



20 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sandbrook Primary School, Wirral, CH46 9PS

Thank you very much for making us feel so much 'at home' when we came to inspect your school recently. Your friendliness and willingness to help were very pleasing and helped to make our visit enjoyable. We were impressed by your good behaviour, politeness and good manners. We learned a lot from the way you talked sensibly to us about your school. We also found that most of you get to school on time and, after a bit of a dip, your attendance is now back to average and improving. Well done! That is very important so do keep it up.

Sandbrook is a satisfactory school. Some important things have improved recently but there are still things that need to be done. Your progress is improving and the standards you reach in English and mathematics are average. Your teachers are working hard to help you to achieve your best and your school leaders have some good ideas about how to improve your school further. The grown-ups in school take good care of you and help you to feel safe. Your parents and carers are very supportive of Sandbrook. They, and your teachers and school governors, would like to see it improve further. The inspectors have asked for the following things to help that to happen. We have asked teachers to make every lesson as good as the very best by:

- using assessment and marking equally well in every class to challenge you in your work, especially those of you who are capable of higher levels
- making sure that all of you listen and work as hard as you can in every lesson
- working together so the best teaching methods are shared
- organising the lessons on letters and sounds so that pupils are challenged at their right level.

In addition, we have asked subject leaders to plan more ways for your learning to be more exciting, as you requested in your school survey, and for you to practise and improve your skills in different subjects and to check that this is working well.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Johnson
Lead Inspector

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Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105074
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	377174
Inspection dates	17–18 January 2012
Lead inspector	Judith Straw

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	383
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kate Dolmor
Headteacher	Paul Freeman
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2006
School address	Danger Lane Moreton Wirral CH46 8UG
Telephone number	0151 677 1091
Fax number	0151 605 0100
Email address	schooloffice@sacredheart.wirral.sch.uk



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Introduction

Inspection team

Judith Straw
Peter Martin
Jean Tarry

Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 22 lessons taught by 15 teachers. They held meetings with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, staff and had informal conversations with parents bringing their children to school. They listened to individual pupils reading and talked to them about their work. Inspectors looked at the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) but no responses were recorded. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at data the school had collected on pupils' progress, safeguarding procedures, school improvement plans, records of the school's monitoring and review processes and the work in pupils' books. They considered the 156 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as analysing questionnaires from pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a below average proportion from minority-ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is below average. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and those with disabilities are average. Government floor targets have been exceeded during the past three years.

The school holds a number of awards including the Activemark, Basic Skills mark and Artsmark. The school has achieved Healthy School status.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	1

Key Findings

- This is a good school. Pupils’ attainment overall has been above average for the last three years. Attainment is consistently high in English. It is above average in mathematics. Senior leaders are already taking prompt action to address the slightly lower attainment in mathematics and pupils’ progress in this subject is accelerating. Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in both key stages achieve well. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school.
- Teaching is consistently good across the school with an increasing proportion of outstanding teaching. The school provides excellent support in lessons for pupils with special educational needs and those with disabilities so that these pupils are able to make good progress and reach above average attainment. The effective curriculum puts a strong focus on core skills but not at the expense of creativity, enrichment and enjoyment.
- Pupils behave well, say that they feel safe and have very positive attitudes to learning. The example set by the adults in the school, combined with well-planned and thoughtful lessons and a stimulating curriculum, results in pupils’ outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have a well-developed sense of social responsibility which is seen particularly in their work for different charities. They are proud to belong to a ‘Rights Respecting’ school. Parents and carers are unanimous that their children are safe and thrive in this stimulating and supportive environment.
- The headteacher and the deputy headteacher’s drive and determination, together with their vision to provide the best possible education for all pupils, have been key factors in the school’s continual quest for improvement. All staff and members of the governing body share this vision and ambition, so that good, consistent teaching has been maintained over many years, pupils’ achievement has been enhanced, attendance is above average, and the emphasis on improving outcomes for pupils is at the forefront of all planning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on existing good and outstanding practice by:
 - ensuring pupils are constantly challenged to achieve the levels of which they are capable, particularly in Key Stage 1
 - raising attainment in mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2 to match the high attainment already achieved in English.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Early Years Foundation stage with skills and abilities broadly in line with those expected for their age but a sizeable proportion have lower attainment in social development, communication, language and literacy, number and calculation. They settle quickly and make good progress so that by the time they enter Year 1 they are achieving at national levels. Children are keen to learn and explore new things and enjoy sharing their discoveries and talking about what they are learning. By the end of Key Stage 1, more pupils than average have reached the levels set for them but fewer pupils than nationally achieve the higher Level 3. In reading, nearly every child achieves the minimum expected level for their age.

By the end of Key Stage 2, attainment is high in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs and those with disabilities, those who speak English as an additional language and those known to be eligible for free school meals all achieve more highly than similar pupils nationally. Good progress is clearly evident in lessons. Pupils work hard and behave well. They know what they need to do to improve and strive continually to avoid careless mistakes and to produce their best work. They concentrate well, pay attention to instructions and clearly enjoy their lessons. Pupils are proud of their achievements, not only in their academic work, but in sport, music, information and communication technology and art. This is clearly evident in the wonderful displays of pupils' work such as Chinese dragons, Pharaoh's headdresses and letters to pen pals.

Any pupil whom the school perceives to be underachieving receives additional support until they are back on track to achieve well. As a result of their very positive attitudes to learning and the efforts taken by the school to support all pupils, progress is good overall, and for an increasing proportion of pupils it is outstanding. The vast majority of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire and all those spoken to during the inspection agreed that their children were making good progress in all subjects, and particularly in English and mathematics. Inspection evidence supports this view.

Quality of teaching

Consistent strengths in teaching across the school include high expectations for behaviour and achievement, excellent relationships, thorough planning to take account of the different needs of pupils and their different learning styles. A wide range of strategies to enthuse and engage pupils and enhance their understanding are deployed. Teaching at its best was pacy and stimulating so that pupils were motivated and eager to learn. For example, in a Year

4/5 lesson on probability, pupils were challenged to 'beat the teacher' with great success. More reflective and thoughtful lessons also result in very good achievement, for example, in a Year 3 art lesson where pupils produced still life pictures, using charcoal and pastels, worthy of any gallery. Pupils' contributions were highly valued and constructive feedback is given regularly so that pupils know how to improve their work. Marking is good across the school, often resulting in a dialogue between teacher and pupil, so that pupils really understand how to reach their targets. Pupils with special educational needs and those with disabilities are supported effectively so that they can take full part in lessons and enjoy their learning. Very occasionally, pace is lost because introductions are a little too long and teachers miss opportunities to move on to more challenging work when it is evident that the more-able pupils have mastered what is being taught.

The curriculum is used imaginatively to promote achievement in literacy and numeracy in as many ways as possible. Pupils enjoy writing in numerous different contexts and developing their skills in using information and communication technology. As well as using computers for research and display, pupils enjoy using digital technology, for example, to film their new scripts for an episode of Dr Who in a Year 5/6 lesson, and regularly use tablet computers in the classroom. Innovative work with a nearby secondary school has enhanced enjoyment of design technology and led to the setting up of a young engineers club. Teachers promote pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by helping them to be curious independent learners and exposing them to music, art and the culture of other peoples and faiths.

The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were agreed that their children are well taught and that the school meets their children's particular needs.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is typically good. Pupils are welcoming and friendly to visitors, are intensely proud of their school and are usually considerate towards each other. Pupils are adamant that there is only a little bullying and that, if it happens, it is quickly dealt with by teachers. The pupils know and understand the school's code of conduct and follow it well. They have a very clear understanding of the many forms of bullying including, for example, cyber-bullying. Examples of racist behaviour and other prejudices are very rare and are not tolerated. Through the positive ethos of the school and the curriculum, pupils are prepared to meet the future not just academically but as good citizens.

The school's systematic and well-considered approach to behaviour management ensures that any misdemeanours are dealt with promptly. High expectations for good behaviour are well-embedded so that there is rarely any disruption to learning in lessons.

The school's safeguarding procedures are exemplary and ensure that children are safe. This view is endorsed unanimously by parents and carers.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and his deputy have a very clear vision for Sacred Heart which has ensured a consistently good and improving education for pupils over time. High expectations have been communicated successfully to all who work in the school. The school sets challenging academic targets which fittingly reflect the ambition to be outstanding. This is a

school which never stands still and senior leaders are relentless in their drive to provide the best. School self-evaluation is rigorous and honest and is robustly supported by sophisticated data collection and analysis. These arrangements have been responsible for ensuring the school sustains its above average and high attainment as they have enabled it to keep track of the progress of all pupils. All the other aspects of monitoring, including lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' written work, are robust and ensure that the quality of teaching continues to improve.

The headteacher has recently reorganised the leadership structure into subject teams so as to devolve leadership and management even more effectively and build capacity throughout the school. Middle leaders play an increasingly productive role in maintaining an overview of progress across the entire school. Senior leaders have a long track record of supporting and developing staff potential to ensure that teachers have a wide range of opportunities to enhance their practice and develop leadership and management skills. This initiative, combined with consistently good provision over time and further improvements to teaching and learning illustrates the good capacity the school has to improve further.

The good curriculum has been overhauled in the last two years in order to ensure that pupils are better prepared for the next stage of their education not only academically but also to develop character, perseverance and ambition. The impact of the curriculum on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in the awareness pupils' show towards others, their willingness to consider and reflect in lessons and their whole-hearted participation in numerous fund-raising activities to help people at home and abroad.

The school enjoys excellent relationships with its parents and carers who are kept regularly informed about their children's progress. The vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire were very confident that any concerns were listened to by the school and promptly acted upon. Speaking for many, one parent described the school as, 'a first class team'. Partnerships with other schools improve the school's provision. Sacred Heart is currently involved in a 'building capacity' project to develop support for pupils for whom English is an additional language across the local area.

Members of the governing body are exceptionally knowledgeable about the school's work. They support the school highly effectively and are fully involved in self-evaluation and ready to challenge the school where necessary. They monitor all aspects of the school's work and ensure that equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work, discrimination is tackled rigorously and safeguarding arrangements are secure.

Glossary

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.
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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.

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Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
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Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



19 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Wirral CH46 8UG

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited you in school this week. We would especially like to thank those pupils who talked to us and those who read to us. You were excellent ambassadors for your school.

We have judged that yours is a good school. Here are some of the things that helped us to make our decision:

- you are achieving better than pupils in many other schools
- you make good progress because you have good teaching
- your behaviour is good and you all put into practice the school code of conduct about courtesy and respect
- you say you feel safe and well looked after in school and your parents and carers agree
- you have excellent attitudes to learning, are curious about the world around you and are interested in trying to make other people's lives better
- your school leaders do an excellent job and that is why the school continues to provide a good education and is improving all the time.

Part of our job is to look for ways in which the school can improve further. We have asked the school to help some of you in Key stage 1 to reach the higher Level 3 and to try to raise your attainment in mathematics to the same high level you reach in English.

You can play your part by continuing to come to school every day and enjoy your learning.

Yours sincerely

Judith Straw
Lead inspector

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The Mosslands School: A Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105103
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	377178
Inspection dates	11–12 January 2012
Lead inspector	Joan Davis HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,031
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	221
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne McArdle
Headteacher	Mark Rodaway
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2009
School address	Mosslands Drive Wallasey CH45 8PJ
Telephone number	0151 6388131
Fax number	0151 6391317
Email address	schooloffice@mosslands.wirral.sch.uk



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Introduction

Inspection team

Joan Davis
Peter Mather
Derek Barnes
Tim Oakes

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 38 lessons, taught by 35 teachers. In addition, inspectors listened to students reading, visited an assembly and observed the behaviour of students at break and during the lunch hour. Meetings were held with three groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, the school's own monitoring records regarding the quality of teaching, information on current attainment and progress, in addition to minutes of meetings of the governing body. The inspection team also considered an analysis of 176 parental and carers' questionnaires and others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

Mosslands is a larger than average-sized school. It is a non-selective school working within a selective school system in the local area. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is almost twice the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average, as is the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average, as is the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs. The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. The school has specialist status for technology and has gained a number of awards, including Investors in People, the Healthy Schools Award and the International 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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- Mosslands is a satisfactory school. The school is inclusive and provides a warm and caring environment where all students are valued as individuals. Students speak highly of the school and parents and carers who returned questionnaires are, for the most part, positive about their child’s experience at Mosslands. Students enter the school with prior attainment that is broadly in line with the national average. They make satisfactory progress as they move up through the school and their attainment at the end of Year 11 is again in line with the national average. The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall throughout the school. The school’s provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is highly effective and as a result these students make good progress. Students appreciate the care they receive from their teachers and know that they are listened to when problems arise.
- The school is a cohesive community and most students behave well. Occasionally, there is a degree of low-level disruption in weakly taught lessons.
- The headteacher has clearly communicated to all members of the school community his drive, vision and ambition for the further development of the school. He is ably supported by an astute and knowledgeable governing body and senior leaders have an accurate grasp of the school’s strengths and weaknesses. As a result, outcomes for students have improved steadily since the headteacher’s appointment in 2007. However, teaching remains of variable quality and opportunities have been missed to share existing good practice and drive improvements in provision. Initiatives designed to do so have not been monitored with sufficient rigour and therefore their impact on practice has been negligible.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and ensure students make good progress by improving the quality of teaching to good or better, thereby reducing disruption to learning, by:
 - disseminating effectively existing good and outstanding practice so that all lessons are as good as the best
 - ensuring that lesson planning addresses the needs, abilities and interests of students
 - introducing more rigorous procedures to monitor and evaluate the impact of initiatives designed to improve provision and ensure that these are implemented by leaders at all levels.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

There has been a rising trend in outcomes for students since the previous inspection. Although performance in some key measures dipped in 2010, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics in 2011 was the highest the school has ever achieved and attainment is now broadly in line with the national average. Students' attainment in science is significantly above the national average.

Students' progress is satisfactory overall. Most parents and carers feel that their children are making good progress at Mosslands. However, in the majority of lessons observed during the inspection, inspectors found that students made only satisfactory progress. In addition, in the three years prior to this inspection, students did not make the progress expected of them in English. Furthermore, this had been identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection. Securing improvements in English has proved a challenge to the school. Owing to turbulence in staffing and difficulties in recruitment, the school has been dependent on a succession of temporary teachers. Another factor contributing to poor progress in English was that students were entered for examinations early and the grades they achieved were not as high as would have been expected, given their ability. The school has acted robustly to address these issues and students are now making the progress expected of them in this subject.

Students with special educational needs and students with disabilities make better progress than their peers. Students who enter the school with weaknesses in reading and writing are particularly well supported through outstanding teaching and excellent use of information and communication technology. For example, in one outstanding Year 7 English lesson observed during the inspection, students were highly engaged and enthusiastic. Through the expert direction of the teacher, students were using a wide range of strategies to enrich their writing, producing work that was refined, creative and of high quality. Students appreciate the 'buddy' system, in which sixth form students listen to younger students reading in order to

develop their literacy skills. Students known to be eligible for free school meals make similar progress to this group of students nationally.

The sixth form is highly inclusive. Students enter the sixth form with prior attainment that is, for the most part, well below the national average. They make satisfactory progress given their starting points, but attainment remains low. In the past, students have enrolled on courses that were not appropriate to their needs and abilities and as a result retention rates have been lower than the national average. The school has effectively addressed this by improving the curriculum, thereby providing more suitable progression routes for students lower down the school. Staff in the sixth form care well for students. They provide thoughtful guidance that is personalised to suit the needs of the individual student.

Quality of teaching

Although most parents and carers feel that their child is taught well at the school, inspectors found that the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, leading to students making progress that is often no better than satisfactory. Too much variability exists and opportunities have been missed to share good practice.

In the best lessons, teachers bring the learning alive by designing a range of exciting activities that stimulate students' imagination and give them a thirst for knowledge. For example, in an outstanding Year 10 French lesson observed during the inspection, students rose to the challenge to find the answer to a puzzle set by the teacher. They used the foreign language confidently, worked well collaboratively and there was a palpable sense of thrill and enjoyment in the classroom. The best lessons are characterised by a brisk pace and a clear sense of purpose. In these lessons, teachers have high expectations and ensure that students understand the relevance of what they are studying by providing a context for their learning, encouraging students to reflect upon issues in the real world, beyond the school gates. In this way, the best teaching supports students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

However, this good practice is not consistent across the school and sometimes too much talk from the teacher leads to dull, pedestrian delivery that does not sufficiently engage the learners. In the weakest lessons, students express their dissatisfaction by engaging in low-level disruption which prevents the teacher from teaching and other students from learning.

In some lessons, teachers use assessment information effectively to plan lessons that incorporate activities to suit the needs and abilities of all learners, thereby ensuring that all students make good or better progress. However, again this good practice is not consistent across the school. Too frequently, activities are insufficiently challenging and do not stretch the students.

The quality of marking of students' work is highly variable. Good practice exists, for example in art and music. However, in some areas of the curriculum, marking is cursory and students do not always receive clear advice on how to improve their work. For the most part, students are aware of their targets but are sometimes unsure as to what they need to do to achieve them. The school has suitable policies

to improve literacy skills across the curriculum, but practice in this respect is inconsistent both in and between departments.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most students say that they feel safe in the school and a large majority of parents and carers echo this point of view. Students state that there is very little bullying and that when it occurs it is dealt with effectively. Students are polite, welcoming and friendly and movement around the school is orderly. Students mix well together socially at break times and in the lunch hour. They understand the risks to which they may be exposed, both within the school and outside it. Attendance is slightly above the national average. Students generally arrive punctually at school but on several occasions during the inspection, students disturbed lessons by arriving late. Racist incidents are rare and dealt with effectively.

Behaviour is improving strongly but remains an area of concern for some parents, carers, students and staff. The school's exclusion rate has been much higher than the national average in the past and low-level disruption was identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection. The school has provided extensive training for staff to improve the effectiveness of strategies designed to manage behaviour. As a result, the number of fixed-term exclusions has fallen dramatically. Most students behave well in lessons. However, the behaviour of students remains poor where teaching is weaker. For example, in one lesson observed during the inspection, students talked and giggled as the teacher tried to explain the work and, as a result, students made little progress.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has been successful in driving improvements in many areas of the school's work, for example in achievement and behaviour. Performance management has been used effectively and underperformance has been tackled robustly. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate. However, improvement planning lacks precision, clear success criteria and lines of accountability. The school has put in place extensive training in order to improve the quality of teaching and has an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses in this area of provision. However, systems for monitoring the impact of initiatives have lacked rigour; therefore improvements have been slow to take effect and practice is inconsistent. The school has made some progress in tackling the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection; therefore the school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

The school works highly effectively with a range of partners and as a result the number of students who leave the school and do not go on to further education, training or employment is well below the national average. This is particularly impressive given that the school is located in an area that is economically disadvantaged.

The curriculum is good overall because it is highly personalised and has had a positive impact on behaviour, motivation and achievement. It is broad and balanced, meets all statutory requirements and developments in the post-16 curriculum are now ensuring that all students can choose courses to suit their needs, interests and

abilities. Students receive clear advice as to what courses they may choose as they move up through the school. Students can elect to study the English Baccalaureate, separate sciences and a wide range of other subjects. Extra-curricular provision is a strength of the school. Students receive guidance on what clubs to join to suit their interests, improve their skills or heighten their self-esteem. There is a wide range of opportunities to visit places of cultural interest, such as the Liverpool World Museum.

The governing body benefits from an astute Chair who has a wealth of experience and expertise in the field of education. The governing body are effective in holding the school to account and have the courage to challenge senior leaders in order to secure improvements in outcomes for students. Procedures for safeguarding are effective and meet all statutory requirements. School leaders, in conjunction with the governing body, promote equality satisfactorily and tackle discrimination effectively.

Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. Students work well together and show consideration for others less fortunate than themselves by raising substantial amounts for charity. The sixth form plays an active role in the school and the wider community, mentoring younger students, helping in departments and working with local primary schools. Students have the opportunity to reflect on ethical issues through the curriculum and through visits, such as the annual tour to the battlefields of Normandy organised by the history department. There are many opportunities to take part in cultural activities, such as the 'Battle of the Bands' music event and the performing arts production that takes place every two years in conjunction with a local girls' school. The life of the school is greatly enriched and enlivened by Petal, a guide dog, currently being trained at the school as part of the school's work for the charity 'Guide Dogs for the Blind'.

Glossary

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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.



13 January 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of The Mosslands School: A Technology College, Wallasey, CH45 8PJ

We would like to thank you all for the friendly welcome we received during our inspection of your school. We were impressed by the good attitudes you show towards each other. Most of you behave well in lessons and most of you enjoy coming to school. We found that your school provides you with a satisfactory quality of education. You make an excellent contribution to charities to help people less fortunate than yourselves. You make satisfactory progress as you move up through the school. Your attainment at the end of Year 11 is in line with the national average but at the end of Year 13, although progress is satisfactory, attainment is lower than the national average. Your school has plans in place to address this.

Teaching is satisfactory in your school overall. We noticed that you enjoy lessons that challenge and stimulate you. You work hard in these lessons. However, behaviour is less good when the activities that the teacher has planned do not interest you. You appreciate the support you receive from your teachers and you know who to turn to if you have a problem. Your attendance is better than the national average, but some of you do not always arrive on time to your lessons.

We have identified a number of areas where we think your school should make improvements. We have asked the headteacher to make sure that good teachers share their expertise with others so that all lessons are as good as the best, with varied and exciting activities that help you to learn. In our judgement, if the school takes these actions then behaviour will improve and so will your examination results.

All of you can help in the further improvement of your school by continuing to attend school regularly and working hard, taking advantage of all the wonderful opportunities available to you. We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joan Davis
Her Majesty's Inspector

Accountability in education



Policy Briefing 13

November 2011

Report author: Ed Hammond, (020) 7187 7369,
ed.hammond@cfps.org.uk
(background research by Verity Clarke)

This briefing, the thirteenth in the Policy Briefing series, explores coming developments in education – in particular, free schools – and the way in which education governance is changing as a result of new Government policies. It also explores the part that local government scrutiny can play in holding education services delivered in local areas to account.

The briefing finishes by posing some critical questions – developed by scrutiny practitioners in the West Midlands – which can help to develop a baseline level of knowledge within scrutiny to allow O&S to further analyse, and make constructive recommendations on, this fast-changing area of public policy.

Contents

1. Introduction and background
2. Free schools and secondary education
3. Further and higher education
4. The effects on accountability
5. Opportunities for scrutiny

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 Following the 2010 General Election, the Government made the decision to significantly expand the pre-2010 academies scheme, and to allow local people to set up “free schools”, entirely responsible for their own governance and with significant freedoms over curriculum and other aspects of teaching.
- 1.2 The Government has also proposed changes to other aspects of the education landscape – further education and higher education in particular, which have both been the subject of recent consultations¹.

¹ “A new fit-for-purpose regulatory framework for the higher education sector” (<http://discuss.bis.gov.uk/hereform/technical-consultation/>) and “New challenges, new chances: next steps in implementing the further education reform programme” (<http://www.bis.gov.uk/Consultations/fe-and-skills-new-challenges-new-chances?cat=closedawaitingresponse>), both 2011.

- 1.3 These changes will mean shifts in the focus and nature of accountability in the education sector – they also present opportunities and challenges to scrutiny practitioners. In a landscape where provision is increasingly being defined by the market, and traditional means of accountability (such as through central regulation and inspection) are being dismantled, holding public sector partners to account on issues which touch on education (for example, skills, economic development, health, community safety, social care and so on) may become more challenging.

2. Free schools, academies and secondary education

The original Academies scheme

- 2.1 The Labour Government announced the “academies” programme in 2000. Superficially, academies are similar to the “grant maintained” schools established by the previous Conservative government between 1988 and 1997. The intention of both schemes was to offer increased freedom to certain specific schools, although the new “free schools” initiative has been described as owing more to the legacy of GM schools than to Labour’s academies programme².
- 2.2 The first academies opened in 2002, with the aim of opening 200 by 2010 (this figure was later increased to 400). The policy objectives of the programme were to:
- to drive up standards by raising achievement across the local area;
 - to increase choice and diversity by creating a new type of local school that provides a good standard of education³.
- 2.3 Academy schools were to be publicly funded, but independent from local authority control. Concern was expressed at the time that this would limit the ability of local authorities to strategically direct policy relating to young people, but the changes to legislation around children’s services in 2005, in the wake of the Victoria Climbié scandal and further to the Children Act 2004, compelled local authorities to focus on education as only one element of the provision of services to young people. This more holistic approach to children’s services led to the development of the “extended schools” model⁴, and a local schooling landscape in which local authorities still, for the most part, can exert significant influence over young people’s lives (even if the

² “Gove’s academies: 1980s ideas rebranded?” (Mike Baker, BBC News, 1 August 2010) at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-10824069>

³ An evaluation of the first few years of the programme against these objectives can be found in “The Academies Programme” (NAO, 2007, HC 254) at http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/0607/the_academies_programme.aspx

⁴ The notion that schools should be the base for a wider range of community, cultural and social activities than “just” education.

power to direct individual schools and head teachers has gradually fallen away).

Governance of academies

- 2.4 Governance had the potential to raise particular issues for academy schools, especially those in the early cohort, although it is difficult to draw firm conclusions from the limited number of examples⁵. Disagreements between local authorities and new academies⁶ reflected the significant cultural change for local authorities which had hitherto had substantial (although waning) control over individual schools in the area. Discussions over bids to run academies were often somewhat protracted (although this reflected the novelty of the scheme over its first couple of years) and, in a number of authorities, overview and scrutiny became involved in the process⁷. This experience might be seen as holding lessons for the first cohort of free schools.
- 2.5 Academy schools had to be supported by a sponsor, who provides either financial support, or business expertise, or both.. Prior to 2007, sponsors had almost complete control over the curriculum at their schools, but since then academies have had to offer at least a core curriculum in English, maths and sciences.
- 2.6 Post-2010 – the Academies Act
The Coalition Government has taken a different approach to academies since taking office. While the Labour Government's approach was to encourage failing schools to convert to academy status – with a sponsor taking responsibility for driving up standards, using their experience – the current Government wants high performing schools to convert, using their knowledge and experience to work with maintained schools in the same area to enhance standards⁸.

⁵ While the National Audit Office had positive comments to make in 2007, a review by the Public Accounts Committee in 2011 raised some concerns (<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmpubacc/552/55206.htm>) A review carried out by the DCSF Select Committee in 2009 explores school governance in more general terms, making comments about governing bodies which could have application to academies ("School Accountability", Children, Schools and Families Select Committee, 2009), <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmchilsch/88/88i.pdf>

⁶ Instances of protracted negotiations between LAs and prospective (and new) academies led the Government to lay in Parliament regulations, pursuant to the Academies Act 2010, to deal with disagreements.

⁷ For example, strategically, in the case of Sandwell (2005), http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/421/sandwell_academy_schools_review, or in relation to specific proposals, in the case of Westminster (2007) http://transact.westminster.gov.uk/newcsu/Policy_and_Scrutiny_Committees/Archived_Scrutiny_Committees/Children_and_Young_People_PandS/2007/17%20September%202007/Item_3-Minutes200607.doc. Ipswich Council is planning work in 2011/12 to look at the success of Academies.

⁸ Set out on the DfE website at <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies/academiesfaq/a0066018/conversion-process>

- 2.7 This has involved a change to governance arrangements, moving away from the concept of sponsorship and towards one based on academies being run by charitable trusts, which more closely reflects the Government's vision for free schools and ensures that the policy direction for both academies and free schools can be merged together. We discuss the governance arrangements of academy trusts in the section below on free schools (as the governance arrangements for both types of school are essentially identical).

Free schools – their development and their objectives

- 2.8 The Government has based their approach to “free schools” on models adopted in Sweden and the USA. As noted above, the ethos of free schools also owes something to the previous, independent grant maintained schools established during the 1990s, but abolished in 1998.
- 2.9 Drawing comparisons from international examples is difficult, however – particularly in terms of attainment. Work carried out by a researcher at the Institute for Education demonstrated that the impact, measured by exam scores, of free schools in Sweden was minimal, and short-lived⁹. Similarly, the US experience with “charter schools” is neither universally positive, nor negative, with the only large-scale study carried out to compare charter schools with publicly funded schools¹⁰ indicating that charter schools perform no better or worse, on balance, than their counterparts. The difficult question of comparison between similar schools, and factoring in levels of improvement in the same school (including taking into account the types of areas where charter schools are likely to open, for example), makes analysis difficult.
- 2.10 The Department for Education has set out some objectives for free schools which, do, however, draw on lessons from international experience, as well as from the academies programme, which is continuing in parallel to the free schools programme. These objectives are about enhancing accountability, making education more cost-effective and meeting local demand for different types of provision.
- 2.11 How free schools compare to others – in terms of governance and operation, free schools are almost identical to academies – the only difference is that all free schools are new bodies established by local people, whereas many academies are existing schools that have undergone a conversion in status. While this may seem to be an academic distinction, it may well affect the culture and ethos of a given school. In fact, because of a recognition of the importance of developing an effective culture and ethos to support learning, in some

⁹ Allen, R: “Replicating Swedish “free school” reforms in England”, *Research in Public Policy*, Issue 10 (University of Bristol, July 2010), full text at <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/cmppo/publications/allen10.pdf>

¹⁰ “Multiple Choice: Charter School Performance in 16 States”, CREDO, Stanford University 2009

instances the closure of an existing school has been followed by a “gap” before the opening of a new academy on the same site., Organisations who previously sponsored academies are marketing their services to parents’ groups to support the free school application process. In some instances such bodies are actively leading the setup of such schools¹¹.

- 2.12 The development and promotion of “free schools” as a model is all about differentiating their culture from the culture of existing maintained schools. Led by inspirational local people – who do not necessarily have a background in education – the Government considers that trustees of free schools will have the dynamism and creativity – and the autonomy – to do things which would not be possible in a maintained school.
- 2.13 The flipside to this approach lies in increased risk, both of declining standards and of service failure. The Ofsted-led inspection regime, which remains in place for free schools and academies (see section below on “Central inspection and support”) will help to identify any problems. While failure in existing academies has been passed off as symptomatic of the challenge of running services in difficult areas¹², schools converting to new academies will be of a good standard already, and free schools will presumably be expected to build up a successful cultural ethos from the ground up. This is an issue to which we will return in section 5.
- 2.14 The New Schools Network¹³ have carried out some research on the distinctions between different schools currently operating in England¹⁴. Broadly speaking, the distinction between maintained and non-maintained schools is not as stark as has been suggested by some¹⁵ – particularly bearing in mind the significant freedoms given to maintained schools over the last few years¹⁶.

Governance in free schools

- 2.15 Governance for free schools is meant to be “light touch”. Deliberately, such schools are not accountable to organisations like local councils, as they derive their funding directly from the Department for Education, and work to a “funding agreement”¹⁷ with central Government. The governance focus is meant to be on parents¹⁸. Free schools are all

¹¹ For example, E-ACT, <http://www.e-act.org.uk/free-schools>

¹² See <http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6043677>

¹³ INSERT REF

¹⁴ “Comparison of different school types” New Schools Network, April 2011, <http://newschoolsnetwork.org/sites/default/files/files/pdf/Differences%20across%20school%20types.pdf>

¹⁵ INSERT REF

¹⁶ INSERT REF

¹⁷ INSERT REF

¹⁸ INSERT REF

charitable trusts and, as noted above, for practical purposes their broad governance arrangements are identical to academies.

- 2.16 The curriculum - Schools must offer a broad and balanced curriculum¹⁹ but beyond the requirement to cover core subjects, are not required to keep to the National Curriculum. As such, different free schools have opted, like academies, to specialise in particular subjects (for example, science and technology) or to adopt an approach which strays significantly from the National Curriculum (for example, the requirement of the West London Free School that every pupil studies Latin up to age 14).
- 2.17 Central inspection and support – free schools are (like academies) still subject to inspections by Ofsted²⁰. Inspections will reflect closely the framework for maintained schools, except the curriculum requirements are relaxed. It is not clear whether inspections are used in the funding agreement as an assurance of continued good performance, or what the result should be if a free school receives an “inadequate” score. As noted at the end of this section, the Government has reserved powers in the Academies Act to intervene in the case of failure, but the precise circumstances in which this will occur are unclear. It should be noted, in this context, that the inspection regime for all schools (including maintained schools) is being significantly streamlined, arguably placing more responsibility on the shoulders of governing bodies to assure consistently high standards (a point which we cover below).
- 2.18 More proactive national support is being provided through the New Schools Network, as well as by the Department for Education. This reflects the position in the USA, where state-based support agencies exist to provide assistance in the establishment and running of charter schools. The New Schools Network has been tasked with assisting those groups wishing to set up new schools to meet the criteria set by Government to enter into funding agreements, as well as providing ongoing support to free schools themselves.
- 2.19 Specific governance issues - The Government has published model Articles of Association for free schools²¹ (which are the same as those that would apply to academies).
- Each Academy will be governed by an academy trust (which is constituted as a company and a charity, required to comply with company and charity law);

¹⁹ A requirement in section 78 of the Education Act 2002. There is no detailed definition but some guidance has been provided – for example, in relation to primary education, in the “Excellence and enjoyment: a strategy for primary schools” (DFES, 2003) at

<http://www.nsead.org/primary/national/excellence.aspx>

²⁰

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/freeschools/freeschoolsfaqs/a0075641/free-schools-faqs-accountability>

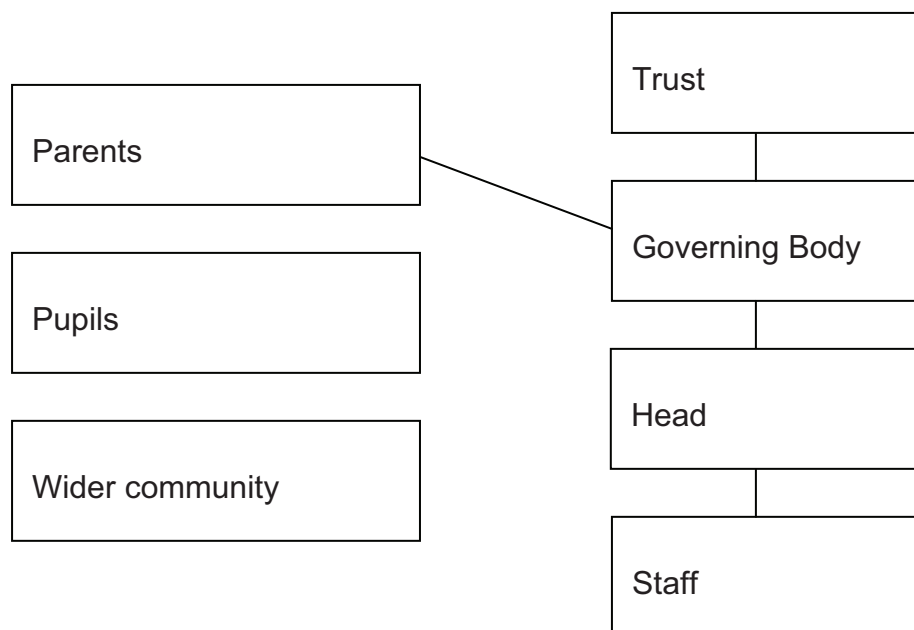
²¹ INSERT REF

- The Academy trust will be owned by its members;
- Although there is no limit, the academy trust must comprise at least three people - one person appointed by the secretary of state (should he choose to appoint), the Chair of the governing body and any additional members appointed by the governors, if unanimously agreed by the members of the trust;
- Membership of the governing body should include at least one parent governor and the principal (ex-officio governor). Then, schools (including free schools) are free to choose whether to have, for example, a local authority governor, staff governor, or co-opted governor;
- The governors may appoint academy employees but they may not exceed more than a third of the total number of governors;
- Individuals can be both members and governors.

2.20 Responsibilities of the governing body include:

1. Ensure the quality of educational provision
2. Challenge and monitor the performance of the academy
3. Manage the academy trust's finances and property
4. Employing staff

2.21 The diagram below shows how limited the formal accountability and governance arrangements are at local level. – it will be important for individual schools to strengthen the links between all of these groups. This diagram does not include the Department for Education, which provides funding, and Ofsted, which performs inspection, both of which feed into various levels of the school's management hierarchy depending on the issue.



- 2.22 There is no obvious or automatic link here between the governing body (or other part of the school's internal governance systems) and the wider community. In the past this role was fulfilled by local authority governors who were supposed to represent the interests of the wider community, while parent and staff governors each provided their particular perspectives. This will be a challenge for free schools, whose success and responsiveness to local need will require a close connection to the wider community. While they may initially have strong connections through the parents who were motivated to set up the school, it has historically proved difficult to maintain involvement from parents as their children move on through the school system. Retention and refreshing of community links will be crucial.
- 2.23 The Local Government Association recently published a paper outlining school governance arrangements, which explores some of the issues in more detail²². Although the focus of the research was on maintained schools, the research reported the views of interviewees that the models of governance are less important than having the right people with the right skills²³.
- 2.24 The research went on to look at the challenges that the education reforms would have for governance in schools²⁴. Interestingly, there seemed to be some concern about the sustainability of high quality support services, currently bought in from local authorities by maintained schools, but in future possibly bought from a wider range of providers. There were also concerns about the fact that more autonomy would mean that governing bodies would need significantly to build their capacity.
- 2.25 Improvements for governing bodies suggested by the report seem to reflect remarkably closely the "capacity" needs often identified for councillors sitting on O&S committees²⁵, suggesting that an approach is envisaged whereby governors will need to play a more independent, strategic, challenging role than they may have done previously. We explore the potential opportunities arising from this in the last section of this briefing.
- 2.26 While most operating free schools provide basic information on governors on their websites, it is difficult to find more detailed information on how governors (including parent governors) are selected, how decisions are made and how the governors are

²² "Governance models in schools" (LGA / NFER, 2011) at <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/18154431>

²³ Ibid, particularly section 3

²⁴ Ibid, section 5

²⁵ See CfPS publications "2010 Annual Survey of Scrutiny in Local Government" (2011), "Global challenge, local solutions" (2009), "Policy Briefing 5: effective resourcing for scrutiny" (2010) all at www.cfps.org.uk/publications

monitoring the fulfilment of the funding agreement. Funding agreements between Government and free schools have not been published (although publication has been repeatedly promised²⁶), and as free schools are technically exempt from the Freedom of Information Act, they are under no obligation to publish detailed information about internal processes and systems. Academies and free schools are also not covered by any Ombudsman regime – a further potential gap in accountability which may cause concern where complaints about their decisions and services arise.

- 2.27 It is, of course, important to remember that governance structures and organisational status (ie whether “maintained” or “free”) do not necessarily guarantee the effective running of a school. Culture and leadership is of prevailing importance, as we have identified in our “Accountability Works For You” framework, which organisations can use to evaluate and improve their own governance arrangements²⁷.
- 2.28 This is important in relation not only to those issues directly pertaining to free schools and academies, but also in the context of the wider children’s services and “safeguarding” agendas. Research suggests²⁸ that a joint approach to learning, improvement, leadership and governance will be vital in ensuring that services provided to children are of the highest quality – strategic thinking in all schools will be critical to this success.

Local authority influence and “control”

- 2.29 It has been said that free schools will be entirely independent of local authority “control”²⁹. Such control has, in any case, been illusory in the maintained sector for several years, as schools have increasingly been given autonomy³⁰. Local authorities have only vestigial power over even maintained schools in their area, limited to issues such as school place planning and issues relating to safeguarding and SEN.
- 2.30 However, schools will continue to be important centres of local community life and it is difficult to imagine that, in many areas, they will

²⁶ A model funding agreement can be found at <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/freeschools/a0074737/free-schools-model-funding-agreement>. The Department for Education has refused previous FOI requests to release funding agreements for the first cohort of free schools on the grounds that they will be published at a future date, but there does not appear to be a timetable for this publication at present.

²⁷ See www.cfps.org.uk/accountability-works for more information

²⁸ “Intervention and the improvement cycle: learning event” (notes of event 20/21 October 2010), National College of Schools and Children’s Services.

²⁹ See

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies/academiesfaq/a0063423/local-authorities-faqs>

³⁰ “School autonomy in England” (NFER, 2007) at http://www.nfer.ac.uk/shadomx/apps/fms/fmsdownload.cfm?file_uuid=A981DA0E-C29E-AD4D-078D-4942AEADC20D&siteName=nfer provides a useful summary of this issue up to 2007.

not develop close working relationships both with the council and with other local partners.

2.31 This may happen in a number of ways:

- Governance. Some free schools may wish to have local ward councillors involved on governing bodies (provision exists for local authority members to sit on governing bodies, although recently-opened free schools do not seem to have taken advantage of this power³¹);
- Back office services. The cost of establishing separate back office support services may provoke some schools in the same area to share services³², or some schools to share services with other public agencies (possibly even local government). The shared service option could be seen as a possible solution to the problems cited in the LGA report referred to above;
- Partnership working and service delivery. Concepts such as “extended schools”³³ are sure to continue, given the benefits they bring to the local community, and so it is possible that councils will commission certain services from free schools, bringing the two partners into a contractual relationship where the council is the client. On certain matters – for example, safeguarding and special educational needs – there will need to be joint working with other agencies, in particular the local authority. This is because free schools are under the same legal obligations on safeguarding and SEN as maintained schools.
- School improvement. There is a specific presumption from the Department for Education that successful free schools will work with struggling schools in their area, and may under certain circumstances take them over. This will involve sharing of experience and resources, and close partnership working.

2.32 Through these measures local authorities and other partners may still exert some influence over the policies of free schools and academies (and vice versa). It is possible that this could, in some areas, lead to disagreement about the nature of schools’ independence, and the extent to which other agencies can involve themselves in school business.

Central government influence and “control”

2.33 We have commented above on the “funding agreement” between the Department for Education and free schools / academies. This will be a key means for the Government to exert some control over schools independent of local authority control.

³¹ None of the free schools opened in September 2011 has a local authority representative on its governing body or board of trustees (at time of writing)

³² Currently, shared services are common in the maintained sector – for example in Norfolk, ICT services are shared as part of the service agreement with the county council.

³³ See http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Childcare/DG_172212

2.34 The retention of Ofsted (and the system of maintained school inspection that will apply to all academies and free schools), and the political need on the part of the Department for Education to ensure that national standards are being met, will potentially involve some tension between Government and free schools. The Government has reserved powers to remove the leadership of a school and impose new management, but under what circumstances these powers will be used in practice remains a moot point.

3. Further and Higher education

3.1 The Government is proposing a new approach both to the management, and regulation, of further and higher education institutions.

Further education

3.2 A process of marketisation of the further education sector has been proposed by the Government in a recent consultation³⁴. Providers are meant to provide “genuine choice”, and to be “more responsive to changing social and economic needs”. This market-driven approach will require providers to understand the local education, skills and economic development landscape, and designing courses that fit in with that landscape. This ought to mean closer joint working with other agencies – local authorities and JobCentre Plus are obvious examples.

3.3 A focus on local need will, according to the consultation, mean a reduction in inspection and regulation. Institutions offering a “quality learning experience” will be minimally inspected but, like in higher education (discussed below) there will presumably remain a need for the publication and provision of accurate information to enable inspectors to assess whether a quality learning experience is actually being provided prior to a decision being made as to whether to inspect – a situation that could become circular³⁵. Even so, national data requirements are being kept to an absolute minimum. Performance improvement is seen by the Government as being a sector-led process³⁶, which will place more pressure on individual institutions to work together, and with other agencies, to maximise their effectiveness.

³⁴ “New challenges, new chances: next steps in implementing the further education reform programme

³⁵ That is to say, it will be impossible to ascertain whether it is necessary to subject an institution to inspection without carrying out an inspection.

³⁶ The consultation emphasises that regulation will be considered more of a “backstop”, with institutions individually and collectively taking more responsibility, held to account by students as consumers.

Higher education

- 3.4 The increase in the cap on fees to £9,000 per year will make a significant difference to the relationship between the higher education sector and the Government, between the sector and the students studying at universities (both individually, and through student unions) and between higher education institutions themselves (in terms of increased competition, which differential fees are meant to provide³⁷).
- 3.5 As a consequence, the Government is proposing changes to the regulatory framework for higher education³⁸. External inspection and regulation is being cut back, replaced by new transparency requirements and an expectation that individual students will be involved more in decision-making. Strengthening the governance arrangements of individual HE institutions is seen as particularly important, with central intervention becoming more “risk based”. A risk based approach will involve individual HE institutions having a much clearer idea of where strengths and weaknesses exist, and providing accurate detail to inspectors.
- 3.6 What inspection and regulation remains will be led by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) – reflecting a funded approach to monitoring in the future. HEFCE will have a particular role as a “student champion”, although what this will mean in practice remains unclear.

4. The effects on accountability

- 4.1 The effects on accountability of these various arrangements will be wide-ranging.
- 4.2 Positive
- Increased freedom from Government control will enable providers to be more responsive to “customers” – pupils, students, parents and potentially the wider community;
 - Less bureaucratic intervention in the form of regular inspection (particularly for FE and HE) will make providers focus more on students and pupils;
 - Changing arrangements gives providers an ideal opportunity to reconsider and review their existing governance arrangements, strengthening them in light of the removal of central prescription and, by so doing, building up a culture of local accountability;

³⁷ See article at <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=415322>

³⁸ “A new fit-for-purpose regulatory framework for the higher education sector” (<http://discuss.bis.gov.uk/hereform/technical-consultation/>)

4.3 Negative

- Financial and capacity challenges may make accountability that is driven by internal systems rather than external pressure difficult to achieve;
- Accountability arrangements will continue to be highly silo-driven, taking no account of the interconnectedness of public services (and the idea of the “web of accountability” posited by CfPS in “Accountability Works”³⁹, and the lessons both of the Total Place programme⁴⁰ and CfPS’s more recent work on health inequalities⁴¹);
- It is troubling that accountability through contract, and through marketisation of services, is not being backed up by a coherent and consistent approach to transparency and publication of information (eg the inconsistent approach to publication of governance material in schools).

5. **Opportunities for scrutiny**

5.1 Opportunities for scrutiny in this area relate to:

- Scrutiny’s broader powers, in the new Localism Act, over partners (more detail on this will be provided in Policy Briefing 14). Schools’, and higher and further education providers’, involvement in a range of public services, give scrutiny a clear way in to speaking to governing bodies about community priorities, even though the Act will not give overview and scrutiny the legal right to engage with free schools;
- The assistance that governing bodies in schools (and similar bodies in further and higher education institutions) may well require in holding decision-makers to account – scrutiny could build positive joint working relationships with such bodies;
- The connected “power of general competence” for local government⁴², which in theory will give scrutiny itself broad powers to investigate issues in the education field;
- Recasting the role of the statutory education co-optees, for county and unitary authorities;
- The general increase in partnership working, both through formal partnership arrangements on strategic priorities, and the sharing of back office services, which will often put local education providers into contractual relationships with the council or other public

³⁹ “Accountability Works” (CfPS, 2010) www.cfps.org.uk/accountability-works

⁴⁰ “Between a rock and a hard place” (CfPS, 2010)

⁴¹ See <http://www.cfps.org.uk/what-we-do/tackling-health-inequalities> and our publication “Peeling the Onion” (2011)

⁴² Introduced in the Localism Act, this power broadens the existing “power of wellbeing” provided by section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000.

agencies – contracts which may be subject to investigations and input by O&S⁴³.

- 5.2 The points above mean that scrutiny should not be reticent, where it is appropriate, in seeking to involve education providers in their work. Below we look in a little more detail about what this might mean in practice (using secondary schools as our example).

Recasting the role of the statutory education co-optees

- 5.3 This briefing does not purport to provide a detailed evaluation of the role performed by statutory education co-optees – those members of scrutiny committees who sit on them by virtue of the Education Act 1996. The original role of the co-optees was as representatives to the council's Schools Organisation Committee, under the committee system, when maintained schools were subject to significant local authority control. Since the introduction of O&S, and the increasing autonomy of local schools, their role has become increasingly unclear.
- 5.4 Notwithstanding some work carried out nationally, by the Department for Education and Employment, in 2000⁴⁴, and by CfPS in 2006, the role of the statutory education co-optees (usually, two parent governor representatives⁴⁵ and two diocesan representatives) remains difficult to discern. In authorities with only two or three scrutiny committees, co-optees may find themselves sitting on committees whose principal business has nothing to do with education at all.
- 5.5 Anecdotal evidence suggests that this state of affairs is being reflected in poor attendance by co-optees (although it should be stressed that this is by no means a national picture). The committees designated as those on which co-optees tend to be large and unwieldy – principally because, for the purposes of political proportionality, the co-optees are all treated as opposition members. In councils with a significant one party majority, this can result in committee membership in excess of 20.
- 5.6 The change in the relationship between councils and local education providers may provide an opportunity to rethink the role of the statutory co-optees – working with them to ensure that their skills, expertise and time can be used in the most effective ways possible.
- 5.7 For example:
- Involvement of co-optees in more task and finish work dealing with issues that have an impact on education – community safety,

⁴³ There is a developing trend for involvement in major procurement and contract management by scrutiny. In Wiltshire, for example, scrutiny is involved in major contract work.

⁴⁴ Archived at http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/downloadableDocs/20_2.doc

⁴⁵ Further to the Parent Governor Representatives (England) Order 2001

health, social care, leisure and environmental services all may have elements where co-optees can make a tangible input;

- Reducing “formal” co-optee input at committee meetings – which they may feel obliged to attend, but which are of minimal value – by redesigning the terms of reference of committees;
- Engaging in dialogue with co-optees about both of the above, and examining how their expert input can be integrated with other, voluntary co-option schemes that scrutiny may operate through s115 of the 2003 Act.

Dealing with the risk of failure – individual schools

- 5.8 One area that has been focused on a great deal is the risk of failure for free schools and academies. Under the Government’s approach, failing schools can be taken over by successful ones (and, as we have noted, this applies just as much for academies as it does for maintained schools). However, it is important that the reasons for failure should be understood, and that they should be examined with a view to strengthening other schools in the area.
- 5.9 In this context, the involvement of scrutiny might provide a positive way, with other governing bodies, of exploring how improvements can be made – as well as providing an open forum for the discussion of these issues with local people. It would be important, under these circumstances, to recognise that this would not be the council trying to assume its former role as a controller of local schools – here, a task and finish group or committee would be more of a facilitator of discussion between a variety of affected parties.
- 5.10 This activity would not be possible unless attempts had previously been made by overview and scrutiny to build up relationships with local schools, and all those involved (including the school’s governing body, with whom this work would have to be carried out in partnership) agreed that scrutiny’s involvement would help to develop a more collegiate approach to improvement across all schools in the area. It would be difficult, and inadvisable, for O&S to attempt to carry out delicate work of this kind without having first built up these important relationships with relevant stakeholders. As yet, CfPS is not aware of any examples of the failure of non-maintained schools being investigated by scrutiny. It should be remembered that overview and scrutiny, as noted above, has no formal powers in legislation over free schools or academies. As such it would need to be demonstrated at the outset that scrutiny’s involvement would add value to the process of learning lessons following failure.

Partnership working – schools across the authority’s area

- 5.11 Work which we have referenced above cites the importance of governing bodies of schools being stronger at holding to account decision-makers (in particular, head teachers) – taking on a role that

would be recognisable to a backbench scrutiny councillor. It could be possible for governing bodies to work more closely with O&S to try to influence the policy of other partners across a wider area, or O&S could help to bring together governing bodies to discuss issues of common concern in the context of council, or other partner, priorities.

- 5.10 Scrutiny will, in any case, find itself needing to work with governing bodies to examine a range of issues which might appear at first sight not to be relevant to secondary education. Health, social care, transport, community safety and other local services – as we have noted – will all have some impact on local education providers.

Making it work

- 5.11 Both of these possibilities are predicated on the building of strong relationships with governing bodies. If, as the evidence seems to suggest, they are to be taking on a more obviously scrutiny-focused role, O&S could be in a position to work with them to build up those skills – such support could, in fact, form part of a wider support agreement with the local authority, as discussed in 2.27 above. Or arrangements could be more informal, with joint working only on areas of mutual interest. Any joint work would, however, require careful and delicate discussion about roles and responsibilities – particularly bearing in mind local authorities' previous roles in education, of which this would not be a replication. It would be particularly important to ensure that councillors understand this crucial distinction.
- 5.12 In the context of all of the foregoing, scrutiny practitioners in the West Midlands have put together a draft list of questions that scrutiny can ask within their authorities right now, to prepare for these forthcoming changes. CfPS suggests that these can provide O&S with crucial baseline information, to allow it to take advantage of some of the more strategic opportunities outlined in the rest of this report, and particularly in this section. Doing so will help to identify where opportunities lie for further partnership working and, ultimately, strengthened accountability in local education. The principles, if not the terminology, can equally be applied to local FE provision, and to an extent to HE provision.
- What education services is the local authority continuing to provide to schools?
 - How are these services being funded?
 - How do these services relate to the priorities for children and young people in the area?
 - Is the local authority considering trading education services with schools?
 - What education services has the local authority stopped providing to schools?

- How is the local authority ensuring that it will still be able to deliver the statutory duties?
 - What are the statutory duties?

- The local authority will continue to have a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places in the area. What information does the local authority have about:
 - proposals for free schools?
 - plans from schools to increase their admissions numbers?

- How is the local authority continuing to foster relationships with schools in the area?

Further reading

- "Academies: research into the leadership of sponsored and converting academies" National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services, 2011
<http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/docinfo?id=149138&filename=academies-leadership-of-sponsored-and-converting-academies.pdf>
- 'Changing School Autonomy: Academy Schools and their Introduction to England's Education', Stephen Machin and James Veroit, Centre for the Economics of Education Discussion Paper NO.123, April 2011
<http://cee.lse.ac.uk/ceedps//ceedp123.pdf>
- "Transparency in Academies" (CIVITAS, 2009 / 10)
- "Higher Education Reforms: Progressive but Complicated with an Unwelcome Incentive" (Institute for Fiscal Studies / ESRC, 2010)
<http://www.ifs.org.uk/bns/bn113.pdf>

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