



Attainment Sub-Committee

Date:	Monday, 17 March 2014
Time:	6.00 pm
Venue:	Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall

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AGENDA

1. MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

2. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 4)

To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 4 December, 2013.

3. OFSTED ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOLS IN WIRRAL (Pages 5 - 114)

4. POST - 16 STANDARDS - SUGGESTED WORK PROGRAMME

Presentation – Paul Smith 14 - 19 Strategy Manager

5. EMPLOYABILITY, PARTICIPATION AND NEETS - SUGGESTED WORK PROGRAMME

Presentation – Paul Smith 14 - 19 Strategy Manager

6. 'BACK TO SCHOOL' - JOINT REPORT FROM CFPS AND LGA (Pages 115 - 150)

7. WORK PROGRAMME FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

ATTAINMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 4 December 2013

Present: Councillor W Clements (Chair)

Councillors M McLaughlin P Hayes
P Brightmore P Williams
T Norbury J Stapleton (In
place of W Smith)

Apologies Councillors W Smith

Mr A Scott Mrs H Shoebridge
Mrs N Smith

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

On a motion by Councillor Moira McLaughlin it was:

Resolved – That Councillor Wendy Clements be appointed Chair of the Attainments Sub-Committee.

On a motion by Councillor Wendy Clements it was:

Resolved – That Councillor Moira McLaughlin be appointed Vice Chair of the Attainment Sub-Committee.

2 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Councillor Wendy Clements welcomed all present to the first meeting of the Attainment Sub-Committee, noted apologies and gave a brief introduction to the work of the Sub-Committee.

3 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Wendy Clements declared a Non Pecuniary interest by virtue of her employment in an early years setting.

4 TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members considered the objectives of the Attainment Sub-Committee which was to support the Council and its partners in

- raising the aspirations of young people, and in particular to raise overall attainment, especially of vulnerable groups;
- improving the outcomes for children and young people in terms of their education, training and their social and economic wellbeing;
- ensuring access to all for early years childcare and education, primary and secondary education and lifelong learning;
- ensuring that children and young people's views and voices are evidenced in and integral to all of the above objectives.

Members also considered the draft terms of reference that the Attainment Sub-Committee would provide oversight, support and challenge to the activities of Wirral Council and its partners in relation to the following areas:

- Demonstrating the attainment of all young people aged 0 -19 (or 25 for those with a learning difficulty / disability);
- Driving forward the attainment of young people in vulnerable groups in order to 'narrow the gap';
- Examining the performance of all schools and colleges in the borough;
- Ensuring there is a prioritised response to schools undergoing Ofsted inspections and those in special categories;
- Improving participation levels of 16 -18 year olds in Education, Employment and Training
- Enhancing lifelong learning provision
- Monitoring Local Authority performance against its statutory duties

Members then considered the proposed working practices of the Attainment Sub-Committee and it was;

Resolved – That the objectives, draft terms of reference and proposed working practices of the Attainment Sub-Committee as outlined in the report be agreed.

5 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AT KEY STAGE

Sue Talbot, Strategic Service Manager, presented the Attainment Sub-Committee with a stock take of results from Early Years to Post 16 and responded to members questions. Members were informed of each of the Key Stages including information relating to gender, pupils in receipt of free school meals, pupils with special educational needs, looked after children and crucially the key areas for development.

Councillors Moira McLaughlin and Tony Norbury left the meeting.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

6 OFSTED ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOLS IN WIRRAL

Sue Talbot, Strategic Service Manager, gave a presentation to the Attainment Sub-Committee with the outcomes of Ofsted Inspections since September 2012. Members were informed of changes to the Inspection process and received a pack of published results relating to Wasp, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Wallasey, Pensby High School for Boys, Bebington High Sports College, University Academy of Birkenhead, Grove Street Primary and Nursery School, Woodslee Primary School, Woodchurch CofE Primary School, Stanton Road Primary School, Pensby High School for Girls, Greenleas Primary School, Kingsway Primary School and St Anselm's College.

Resolved – That the presentation be noted.

7 PUPIL PREMIUM - HOW IS IT SPENT BY SCHOOLS IN WIRRAL?

Sue Talbot, Strategic Service Manager, presented a report relating to Pupil Premium in Secondary Schools. It was reported that Pupil Premium had been introduced by the government in April 2011 following work by John Dunford, the retired leader of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), who had urged governments to provide schools with extra money to educate disadvantaged pupils. John Dunford was now the Pupil Premium Champion (July 2013) tasked with talking to schools about the most effective ways of using the extra money and feedback issues raised by school leaders to ministers and civil servants. It was reported that from September 2013 schools would be held to account by Ofsted for the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and the progress they made with particular emphasis on closing the achievement gap with other pupils. Schools judged by Ofsted as 'requiring improvement' where the concerns were raised about the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils would take part in a Pupil Premium review. These schools would be supported by an experienced Headteacher from another school, with the aim of developing a strategy for using pupil premium more effectively. The report contained the methodology of information gathering, the key findings and included the following recommendations:

- The progress of free school meal pupils continues to be monitored regularly, schools are actively encouraged to learn from best practice, and schools will be held accountable for outcomes for children in receipt of free school meals, with a particular focus on schools in Band 3 and Band 4.
- An HMI Ofsted signature event regarding the use of Pupil Premium to improve children's outcomes to be organised by EQ (Education Quality).
- The Ofsted Pupil Premium Analysis Tool (Reference 130045) to be distributed to schools for their use.

- An Annual report to be prepared for the Attainment Sub-Committee
- An Annual report to be shared with schools at Schools Forum after consideration by the Head Teacher consultation groups (Primary Head Consultation Group and Wirral Association of Secondary Head teachers)

'The Pupil Premium – How schools are spending the funding successfully to maximise achievement' and 'The Pupil Premium Analysis and challenge tools for schools' were attached to the report as appendices.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

8 WORK PROGRAMME FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The Attainment Sub-Committee considered a report on the potential items for the Sub- Committee work programme and discussed further work items for consideration, including Pupil Premium, closing the gap in attainment for Looked After Children and RADY – Raising the Attainment for Disadvantaged Young people.

Resolved – That the report be noted and the suggested items be included in future meetings of the Attainment Sub-Committee.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved – That the next meeting of the Attainment Sub-Committee be held in March 2014 on a date to be confirmed.

New Brighton Primary School

Vaughan Road, Wallasey, Merseyside, CH45 1LH

Inspection dates 15–16 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- All pupils, whatever their individual starting points, make at least good progress at this school and achieve well.
- Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs, including those who attend the specially resourced provision, achieve well because of the high-quality support and care they receive.
- Pupils who join the school at other than the usual times are helped to settle in exceptionally well because of the warm welcome provided by adults and pupils.
- Teachers expect the best of pupils. They plan tasks which are interesting, engaging and lead to good progress.
- The range of enrichment activities available to all pupils is a real strength of the school and contributes well to their learning and enjoyment.
- Pupils are very proud of their school and report they feel safe and happy. Pupils attend regularly and standards of behaviour are good.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of all aspects of the school's work. They believe that this is a good school and inspectors agree.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide strong leadership for this improving school. They are well supported by other leaders, all staff and the committed, well-informed, governing body.
- School leaders regularly check on the quality of teaching. Information gained is used to bring about ongoing improvements. As a result, the quality of teaching is good overall and includes some that is outstanding.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small amount of teaching requires improvement and not enough is yet outstanding.
- Pupils do not always have the opportunity to correct and improve their work after it has been marked.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent.
- Individual targets set for pupils to help them improve their work are not specific enough.
- Sometimes pupils do not have enough opportunities to work things out for themselves. On occasion, pupils rely too heavily on teachers to answer their questions rather than thinking for themselves.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 24 lessons or parts of lessons.
- The inspectors also looked at examples of pupils’ work and listened to pupils read. They observed the teaching of reading skills and talked to pupils about the books they have enjoyed and those that they are currently reading.
- Meetings were held with three groups of pupils and inspectors spoke to pupils about their work. Inspectors held meetings with three governors. They spoke to a representative of the local authority, the independent School Adviser who works with the school and met with members of the school staff.
- The inspectors visited the ‘Bright Sparks’ before- and after-school club to talk to pupils and observed the early morning and after-school sports sessions.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day. They took account of the school’s own questionnaires to parents and pupils and the 52 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Forty-seven responses to staff questionnaires completed during the inspection were also considered.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including safeguarding documents, records of current standards and progress, the school development plan and documents relating to pupils’ behaviour and attendance. Minutes from governing body meetings were also considered.

Inspection team

Lyn Pender, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Maureen Coleman	Additional Inspector
Terry Bond	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- New Brighton is much larger than the average-sized primary school. The number on roll has risen by 65 pupils since the last inspection. The proportion of pupils who join and leave the school, particularly in Key Stage 2, is above average.
- The nursery has places for 52 children and is fully subscribed. A further intake of around 40 children joins the school's Reception classes each year.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with a very small proportion from other heritages. Almost all pupils speak English as their home language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average. An above average proportion of pupils is supported at school action plus or has a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through pupil premium funding is above the national average. (This additional funding is provided for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The local authority provides additional resources for a 12-place unit in Key Stage 1 for pupils with expressive language difficulties and also provides a 10-place unit in Key Stage 2 for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Pupils attending these provisions are drawn from across the local authority.
- The 'Bright Sparks' breakfast-and after-school club is provided each day during term time for pupils at the school.
- The school holds the International Schools award.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement further by improving teaching so all is at least good and more is outstanding by:
 - improving the quality of marking so that all is as good as the best practice that exists in the school and by making sure that pupils act on their teachers' advice
 - ensuring that the individual targets set for pupils show them the small steps they need to take to improve their work
 - making sure that teachers provide more time for pupils to work things out for themselves.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The majority of children join the nursery with skills typical for their age, although some aspects, including communication and reading, are lower. Children make good progress and most move up into the school's Reception classes. Here, they are joined by around the same number of children, many of whom have attended other pre-school settings. Most children who start school in the Reception classes enter with skill levels that are typically lower than those expected for their age.
- Good teaching ensures children settle well into the Early Years Foundation Stage and they become happy, interested and busy learners. Most children make at least good progress from their individual starting points and, although there are some variations from year to year, skills are usually close to expected levels for their age by the end of the Reception Year.
- Progress from Year 1 to Year 6 is good. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are broadly in line with the national average overall and in writing and mathematics. Attainment in reading was below the national average in 2013. However, school data and inspection evidence show that changes to the teaching of reading made by school leaders are leading to rapidly rising standards in reading across the school.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly average, although some years they vary. For example, attainment at the end of Year 2 in 2013 was below the national average. However, a higher proportion of pupils in this group than usual started school with achievement levels typically lower than expected. They made at least good progress during Key Stage 1.
- Pupils who join the school at other than the normal times achieve well. The gap between these pupils and those who have been in the school for most of their primary education closes as they move up through the school. They make at least good and sometimes rapid progress from their starting points, which are often lower than those expected for their age.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those who attend the two classes which provide the resourced provision, make at least good progress because their needs are identified quickly and carefully targeted support is provided.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, including those eligible for free school meals, make as good progress as other pupils. By the end of Key Stage 2 these pupils are around a term behind their peers in the school but the attainment gaps are narrower than those seen nationally.
- Standards in reading are rising increasing quickly across the school. Letters and sounds are taught successfully and in 2013 the proportion of pupils who met the required standard in the Year 1 reading assessment was broadly as expected. There is some variation linked to pupils' starting points and abilities, but overall pupils make good progress in reading, reflecting the good teaching of reading across the school.
- Pupils say how much they enjoy reading and like the range of books provided for them. They particularly enjoy the way that their teachers link much of their literacy work to whole-class texts. Many pupils read at home regularly and older classes use the school's virtual learning environment (VLE) to help with literacy homework activities.

The quality of teaching

is good

- A calm, welcoming and well-organised learning environment exists throughout the school.
- Teaching is mostly good and sometimes it is outstanding, particularly in the Key Stage 2 class which includes the resourced provision. As a result, the majority of pupils achieve well.
- Teachers plan lessons which capture the interests of children well. For example, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children's imaginations were captured as they used their senses to find out about different fruits. They were excited about the trip they were to take to the local

greengrocers.

- The excellent relationships that exist in the school are a key factor in helping pupils to learn well. Teaching assistants are well trained and deployed, and make a particularly good contribution to supporting the learning of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Pupils receive good quality in-class support and benefit from well-taught intervention programmes tailored to meet their specific needs and promote their confidence and belief in themselves as learners.
- Adults make learning exciting for pupils, such as in a Key Stage 1 class where pupils were learning about animals that live in very cold climates. The adults helped them to take turns visiting the 'cave' that had been created in the classroom. Great questioning by the adult enabled pupils to use their imaginations to feel as if they were in the cold place with the animals.
- Teachers plan lessons well and use their good subject knowledge and their understanding of how well pupils are doing to ask effective questions and demonstrate new concepts. A Year 6 class was preparing scripts for the filming session planned for the following day. Their teacher asked searching questions which encouraged pupils to think carefully about how they were going to use their time on camera to present their arguments about the need to protect wild animals.
- Lessons begin quickly and move at a pace that means no learning time is lost. Some teachers are successful in striking the right balance of time for pupils to listen and answer questions and to discuss ideas with others. Usually teachers ensure that pupils have time to think hard about what they are learning. However, sometimes teachers answer pupils' questions too readily. This stops pupils thinking for themselves.
- Teachers regularly check pupils' learning in class through questioning and ongoing checks on pupils' understanding. Although books are marked regularly, teachers' comments do not always show pupils how to improve. Even where marking provides good guidance, gaps in learning are not always made up quickly enough because pupils do not have enough time to act on the advice given or make the suggested corrections to their work.
- Individual targets are set in English and mathematics. However, these are sometimes too broad to enable pupils to see the small steps they need to take to improve.
- Homework is set regularly and provides effective support for pupils' learning, for example, when planning for lengthier pieces of writing.
- Decisive actions by the school have resulted in improved teaching of reading and led to an increase in pupils' enjoyment of books. Pupils read regularly and standards in reading are improving. Younger pupils benefit from a firm grounding in learning about letters and the sounds they make, and they use this well to tackle new words.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Behaviour in lessons and around school is good. Pupils' achievements are celebrated and individuals are well supported to overcome any barriers to learning. Equal opportunities are promoted well, discrimination of any kind is not tolerated and harmonious relationships are evident around the school.
- Pupils, including those who attend the resourced provision, say they feel safe in school and their parents overwhelmingly agree that their children are safe and well cared for. Pupils understand different forms of bullying including cyber-bullying. They say that incidents are rare and trust the adults to resolve any problems quickly and fairly.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school very carefully considers pupils' social and emotional development. The learning mentor and family support worker work very closely with parents and other agencies. They work relentlessly to make sure that any pupil or members of their family experiencing a period of difficulty receive the support they need.
- The school is rightly proud of the 'Tranquillity Room' which is situated in the heart of the school. This calm and peaceful space offers a safe place for pupils to explore their feelings and to help

them recognise how they feel about themselves and others while also learning strategies to help them improve their social and relationship skills.

- Pupils enjoy contributing to the life of the school, for example, as school councillors and play leaders.
- Pupils arrive at school on time. Attendance is above average and reflects pupils' enjoyment of school as well as their parents' support.

The leadership and management are good

- Staff and leaders, including governors, share the headteacher's ambition for the school. All are committed to providing the best possible care and education for pupils. The school has good capacity to continue to move forward.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's performance. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and these are reflected in the school's plans for improvement.
- Increasingly secure systems are in place to track the progress of pupils. Leaders take careful note of the pupils who are new to the school, including those who attend the resourced bases, as well as those who have attended the school since the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where there are gaps in pupils' achievement or if any pupils start to fall behind, staff take prompt action to help them catch up.
- Senior leaders have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching. They ensure staff have access to a wide range of training to improve their skills. Best teaching practices are shared across the school and teachers' targets and pay awards are securely linked to the progress that pupils make.
- The resourced bases are managed very well. Pupils learn in their bases and some regularly join their peers in the other classes for parts of the day.
- Subject leaders are highly motivated and passionate about the subjects they lead. They know about the performance of the subjects they lead and are clear about their roles and responsibilities. All of this is helping to improve the quality of teaching.
- Pupils' learning is enriched by a wide range of visits, including a number of residential trips. Plenty of opportunities are provided for pupils to practise reading, writing and mathematics skills through other subjects. Teachers make the best use of the school's limited outdoor space by using the local beach and parks for learning.
- An extremely varied, well-attended programme to develop sporting skills is offered at the beginning and end of each day through the primary sports funding. This is developing sporting skills very well, including those of swimming, and is engaging pupils in regular, active and fun sessions which are promoting a healthy lifestyle effectively.
- School leaders have the confidence of parents. Regular communications with parents ensure that they are informed about and actively involved in their children's education.
- The school works closely with a cluster of local primary schools. A teacher in the school helps other schools in the local authority develop their teaching of information and communication technology.
- The local authority provides an appropriate level of support for this good school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body thoroughly reviews the school's work. Governors hold accurate views of the quality of the teaching and effectively check the management of the school's performance. They regularly visit the school and are linked to year groups and school subjects. Governors ask searching questions of senior leaders and request additional information if needed. Valuable support is provided for the headteacher. Governors set her challenging targets and ensure teachers' pay is linked to pupils' achievement. Governors have a secure understanding of the allocation of pupil premium funding and the primary sports funding and check the impact of this additional funding carefully. Governors ensure that their strengths and expertise are used effectively to support the school and have undertaken relevant training to enable them to fulfil their roles. Finances are managed well and safeguarding arrangements meet

requirements. The chair is a member of the local authority's Governors' Forum.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	104992
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	440359

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	592
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ken Frost
Headteacher	Coleen Hibbard
Date of previous school inspection	7 April 2011
Telephone number	0151 6393869
Fax number	0151 6389102
Email address	schooloffice@newbrighton.wirral.sch.uk

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Castleway Primary School

Castleway North, Moreton, Wirral, Merseyside, CH46 1RN

Inspection dates 11–12 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- In recent years, pupils' achievement has been too variable.
- The proportions of pupils making more than the progress expected of them by the end of Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics has fluctuated significantly over the last three years and has been too low.
- The most able pupils do not always achieve as well as they should.
- Some teaching requires improvement and not enough is good or outstanding. Teaching is not always challenging enough. Some teaching lacks the necessary pace to keep pupils fully engaged. In some lessons, pupils spend too long listening to their teachers when they are ready and eager to get on with their own learning.
- Leaders and managers are not yet rigorous enough in monitoring and improving the quality of teaching so pupils' achievement can rise. They do not hold teachers rigorously enough to account for pupils' progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Children in the Reception class make good progress because teaching and provision are good. Pupils' achievement in Key Stages 1 and 2 is on a rising trend because the quality of teaching is improving.
- Pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding achieve as well, and frequently better, than their classmates.
- Attendance has improved and is now average.
- The headteacher has an accurate understanding of what the school does well and where it could do better. Governance is improving strongly.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in seven classes taught by seven teachers. Two of the observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher. The inspector also observed the teaching of grammar and phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) in four different year groups. The inspector listened to a group of Year 2 pupils read.
- The inspector held meetings with senior and middle leaders, a group of pupils, four governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector took account of a wide range of documentation including: the school's self-evaluation and development plan; records of the monitoring of teaching and learning; policies relating to behaviour and safety; minutes of meetings of the governing body and local authority reports on the school's effectiveness.
- There were no responses from parents on the Ofsted on-line questionnaire, (Parent View). However, the inspector took account of 75 replies to a questionnaire sent out recently by the governing body to parents. The inspector also took account of questionnaires returned by members of staff.

Inspection team

Stephen Wall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Castleway is smaller than most primary schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards that set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Over the last three years there have been several staffing changes, including the appointment of a new headteacher in September 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make all teaching at least good with more that is outstanding, so that pupils make consistently good progress over time by:
 - making sure that teachers always set tasks that are at the right level of challenge for pupils of differing abilities, especially for the most -able pupils
 - ensuring that the pace of teaching is always fast enough to keep pupils fully engaged and on task
 - making sure that pupils, especially the most able, start work on their own as soon as they are ready and do not spend too long listening to instructions to the whole class.
- Improve further the impact of leaders and managers on raising achievement and improving teaching by:
 - making sure that the quality of teaching is monitored more rigorously and that the outcomes have a sharper focus and are better used to bring about improvements
 - making targets for pupils' progress more challenging and holding teachers more closely to account for achieving them.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because, despite a rising trend in attainment over the last three years, the pattern of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has been too inconsistent and too few of the most able pupils achieve as well as they could. The proportion of pupils that make good progress in English and mathematics has been too low.
- In the Reception Year, children make good progress from their generally well below expected starting points because teaching is good and the range of activities provided for them stimulates their interest and eagerness to learn.
- By the end of Key Stage 1, attainment is below average but has risen steadily over the last three years, especially in reading and writing.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, attainment has risen in recent years and is now below average. However, the pattern of attainment over the last three years has fluctuated significantly from being well below to below average. This has been caused in large part by disruption to staffing.
- The proportion of pupils making the progress expected of them in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 in recent years has generally been in line with or above the national average. However, the proportion of pupils making better progress than this from their starting points has been too variable and not consistently close to or above the national average.
- The achievement of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, is above that of similar pupils across the country in English and mathematics. They make similar and sometimes better progress than others in the school. In 2013, the attainment of these pupils was slightly above that of their classmates in reading and mathematics and equal in writing. The trend over the last three years has seen the gap closing rapidly and demonstrates the school's strong and successful promotion of equal opportunities.
- The vast majority of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs make at least the progress expected of them from their starting points and an increasing number is doing better than this. This also demonstrates the school's strength in providing equality of opportunity.
- Since her appointment, the headteacher has introduced several new strategies to raise levels of literacy and numeracy, including a much more streamlined approach to the teaching of phonics and writing. The rising trend in pupils' attainment in literacy and numeracy shows that the initiatives are starting to have a positive impact.
- The school is using the new Primary School Sport funding to provide specialist training by high quality for staff in teaching physical education and sport to make teaching more effective and of better quality to promote enjoyment and healthy lifestyles for pupils.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although teaching is improving, it still requires improvement because not enough is good or outstanding. In recent years, the impact of teaching on pupils' progress and achievement has been too variable.
- In too many lessons, teaching does not establish the right level of challenge for pupils of differing abilities, especially for the most able pupils. This results in some pupils finding the work too difficult and others finding it too easy. Progress slows as a result.
- The pace of teaching in some lessons is not fast enough to keep pupils interested, engaged and 'on their toes' the whole time. As a result, interest wanes for some pupils. This has a detrimental effect on their achievement.
- Sometimes teachers spend too long on explaining to the whole class what pupils are to do in lessons when pupils are often ready and eager to get on with their own independent learning, especially the most able pupils. Again, this slows the progress that some pupils make.

- Teaching in the Reception class is good. It is organised well to provide a good range of activities both indoors and outdoors that stimulate children's interest and engages them well in their learning.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. Most use this effectively to ask challenging questions that make pupils reflect on their answers and give reasoned responses. This promotes pupils' speaking, communication and their numeracy skills effectively.
- Teachers forge good relationships with the pupils in their classes. As a result, most pupils are eager to please their teachers and to give of their best.
- The teaching of phonics in the younger classes and of grammar in classes for older pupils has benefited from the recent training instigated by the headteacher and the subject leader for English. The teaching, including that by teaching assistants, is planned effectively and carried out with pace and enthusiasm. As a result, pupils' skills in reading and grammatical accuracy in their writing are growing securely and rapidly.
- Teachers mark pupils' written work regularly and diligently. The vast majority of teachers' comments provide pupils with good step-by-step advice on how to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The vast majority of pupils have positive attitudes towards school and learning. They are keen to give of their best. However, sometimes when teaching does not engage pupils fully in their learning because the pace is too slow or because the level of challenge is not appropriate, pupils show some frustration and occasionally chatter.
- Around the school, pupils are polite to the adults who work with them and to visitors. They play together respectfully and with good regard for the comfort and safety of others.
- Case studies show that pupils who may be vulnerable are identified early and that they are supported and cared for by a wide range of interventions. Pupils and their families appreciate the school's hard work to make sure that these pupils get the most out of their education at Castleway.
- Pupils' high levels of respect, their good manners and their solid sense of right and wrong testify to the school's effective promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils say, and school records confirm, that bullying of any kind is rare. Occasionally there is some 'falling out' and name calling, but adults are quick to deal with it. Pupils also say that the adults working with them are caring, approachable and fair.
- Since her appointment the headteacher has strengthened procedures for checking on and promoting good attendance. Parents have been made more aware of the importance of regular attendance to pupils' achievement and personal development. Parents are responding positively to the rallying call. As a result, attendance has improved in recent years and is now average.
- Punctuality to school has also improved. School records show that the number of pupils arriving late for school has decreased significantly.
- The recent survey of parents' views conducted by the governing body shows that the vast majority of parents have few concerns about behaviour or bullying in the school.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because, despite a rising trend in pupils' achievement in recent years, too much teaching still requires improvement and not enough is good or outstanding and pupils' achievement is still not consistently good.
- Leaders and managers monitor teaching and learning regularly. However, the monitoring sometimes lacks enough rigour to give sufficiently sharp focus in identifying specific areas for improvement.
- Despite improvements in procedures for tracking pupils' progress in recent years, targets for the proportion of pupils who make better than the progress expected of them are not yet as high as

they could be and teachers are not held rigorously enough to account for pupils' good progress in their classes.

- The headteacher has an accurate view of what the school does well and where it could do better. She has tackled and eradicated inadequate teaching and is laying solid foundations for the school to continue to improve.
- The school's planning for future improvement is of good quality. It identifies appropriate areas for action. Recent initiatives to improve pupils' literacy skills are starting to bite and achievement is rising as a result.
- Subject leaders and other middle managers feel more secure in their roles. They welcome the new responsibilities that the headteacher has given them and are playing a more effective role in bringing about improvements in their areas.
- The headteacher has tightened procedures for managing the performance of teaching staff, including teaching assistants. There is a firm link between performance and progression up the salary scale.
- The curriculum is broad and well balanced. Pupils particularly enjoy topic work that is planned to give them a range of opportunities to apply and develop their literacy and numeracy skills. The good range of extra-curricular activities in sports and the arts involves pupils increasingly in the local community and underpins their good levels of personal development.
- After providing intensive support for the school in recent years, the local authority has scaled down its support to light touch monitoring in recognition that the school is now set fair to carry on improving by itself.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are fully in place and give no cause for concern.
- Most parents are supportive of the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The relatively recently appointed Chair of the Governing Body provides the governors with exceptionally purposeful and knowledgeable leadership. New appointments to the governing body provide a wide range of skills that are being used very effectively to hold the school increasingly to account and to restore parental confidence and involvement in the work of the school. Training for governors has taken place to give the governing body a more accurate view of how well the school is doing in comparison to similar schools locally and nationally. They are using this knowledge astutely to support and challenge the headteacher in her quest for further improvement. The governing body has a firm grasp on the school's finances including how the pupil premium is allocated and the impact it has on closing gaps in attainment and progress for those pupils eligible for this support. The governing body knows about the quality of teaching keeps a close eye on the use of performance management and is fully aware of its links with staff pay progression.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105002
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	426073

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	135
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Owens
Headteacher	Valerie Kermode
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2011
Telephone number	0151 677 2953
Fax number	0151 677 6953
Email address	schooloffice@castleway.wirral.sch.uk

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Sandbrook Primary School

Stavordale Road, Moreton, Wirral, CH46 9PS

Inspection dates 13–14 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Too few pupils make more than expected progress from their starting points or reach the higher levels, especially in reading and writing, by the end of Year 6. As a result, achievement requires improvement.
- Standards in Key Stage 1 have been below average in recent years and few pupils reach the higher levels.
- Pupils' skills in making sense of letters and sounds that form words are underdeveloped in Key Stage 1.
- Teaching requires improvement. The quality is not consistently good enough to ensure that pupils in all year groups are able to make good progress.
- Work provided by teachers does not always offer appropriate pace or challenge to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly the most able.
- The quality of teachers' marking is inconsistent and does not always show pupils how their work can be improved.
- Individual pupil's targets are not used well enough to help pupils improve their work.
- Senior and subject leaders do not yet have the skills to check on and improve the quality of teaching and learning. Consequently, they are not able to effectively support the headteacher in her drive to quicken the pace of the school's improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher provides strong leadership. She has high expectations, a clear view of what constitutes good teaching and an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The school is improving. For example, teaching is getting better; most teaching and learning seen during the inspection was good.
- The attainment of most pupils currently in the school is now broadly in line with expectations for their age and more pupils are making faster progress than they have previously.
- Pupils enjoy school. They attend regularly and say they feel safe and cared for well.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 13 lessons or parts of lessons including three joint observations with the headteacher. The inspectors also looked at examples of pupils’ work, listened to pupils read and observed the teaching of reading skills.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils and inspectors spoke to pupils about their work. Inspectors held meetings with five governors. They spoke to two representatives of the local authority and met with members of the school staff.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day. They took account of the school’s own questionnaires to parents and the 13 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Responses to staff questionnaires completed during the inspection were also considered.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including safeguarding documents, records of pupils’ current standards and progress, the school improvement plan and documents relating to pupils’ behaviour and attendance. Minutes of governing body meetings were also considered.

Inspection team

Lyn Pender, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kevin Boyle

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British and speak English as their home language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average. A below average proportion of pupils are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and the pupil premium funding is above the national average. This additional funding is provided for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- There have been a number of staff changes since the last inspection including several periods of absence experienced by members of the leadership team. In addition, the deputy headteacher resigned his post to take up a position in another school at the end of the summer term 2013. The post of deputy headteacher is currently vacant.
- The governing body provides a breakfast club for pupils.
- The headteacher offers support to the local cluster of schools at the request of the local authority.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, in order to further raise standards and increase the rate of progress made by pupils by:
 - developing the skills of teachers and teaching assistants so that there is a systematic and well-organised approach to the teaching of early reading skills
 - ensuring that teachers plan work which is closely matched to individual skills and abilities and offers appropriate pace and challenge to all pupils and especially the most able
 - ensuring that teachers' marking, particularly in writing, matches the best practice that exists in the school and that pupils know their individual targets and have regular opportunities to use these to improve their work.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that key leaders have the skills to check the quality of teaching and pupils' progress so that they can then use this information to take a more active role in driving school improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because from their starting points, the large majority of pupils generally make the progress expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6, but too few pupils consistently do better than this, particularly in reading and writing.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have been below average overall in recent years and although more pupils are now beginning to reach the higher levels, there are still too few doing so consistently in reading, writing and mathematics.
- At the end of Key Stage 2, standards are broadly in line with the national average in reading and mathematics, however, standards in writing are not as strong and too few pupils reach the higher levels in reading and writing.
- The most able pupils do not make the progress they are capable of because the work they are given is not always sufficiently demanding.
- The youngest children get off to a good start in learning about letters and the sounds they make (phonics) but opportunities to build fully on this learning in Years 1 and 2 are sometimes missed and progress is less consistent at times. By the end of Year 6, most pupils read a variety of texts with fluency and understanding.
- Children typically join the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skill levels below those expected for their age and a significant minority are at an early stage of developing speech and language and self-help skills. They settle well into the Nursery and Reception classes and quickly become happy, interested learners. Good progress is usually made throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, however, some disruption to teaching in 2013 meant that progress was slower in the Reception class and fewer children than expected entered Year 1 working in line with age-related expectations.
- Pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers in the school given their starting points and abilities.
- The pupil premium funding is helping to close the gaps between pupils eligible for this funding and others in the school. At the end of Key Stage 1 in 2013, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding was in line their peers. Key Stage 2 pupils eligible for this funding also attained broadly similar standards as their peers in reading and writing. They were around a term behind in mathematics but the gap was narrower than that in 2012.
- School data and inspection evidence indicates that pupils are treated equally. It shows that the majority of current pupils are now working at least at the level expected for their age and more are attaining the higher levels. In all year groups, faster progress is being made and older pupils, in particular, are helped to overcome any underachievement experienced lower down the school, because teaching is improving.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- School records, evidence from observations, some undertaken jointly by the headteacher and inspectors, and pupils' work indicate that the quality of teaching requires improvement.
- Although the large majority of teaching observed by inspectors was good, too little is yet outstanding and some, particularly in Key Stage 1, still requires improvement. Consequently, pupils are not yet making consistently good progress. Nevertheless, as a result of well-focused staff development, the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection.
- In less effective lessons, teachers sometimes talk too much so that the pace of learning drops and the level of challenge is not always high enough to meet the needs of all pupils. For example, activities do not always challenge the thinking of the most able pupils.

- Although pupils make adequate progress in developing early reading and writing skills overall, their progress varies. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 does not consistently build on the good start pupils make in the Early Years Foundation Stage when learning about letters and the sounds they make (phonics). The pace of teaching in lessons is not fast enough to move learning along quickly and classrooms are too noisy to allow adults to check that pupils are using the correct sounds and to address misconceptions as soon as possible.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and positive comments are provided by teachers. However, although there are instances of best practice within the school, for example, that seen in the books of the Year 5/6 literacy group, teachers' marking, particularly in writing, does not always give pupils the precise guidance they need to improve their work.
- The use of pupils' individual targets is not yet used consistently in all classes to help pupils know how to improve their work.
- Where teaching is strongest, lessons are well planned and move a long at a good pace. Teachers provide activities which are well matched to pupils' needs and ensure that a good level of challenge is provided for all pupils including those capable of reaching the higher levels. In these instances pupils make good progress.
- Warm relationships are a typical feature of all lessons.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress, as a result of the very effective use of checks on children's progress in order to plan the next steps in learning. Teachers and teaching assistants take every opportunity to involve children in conversation and are skilful in enabling them to learn through play. During the inspection, children enjoyed using their imagination to create a fire station in the Reception classroom. Their play in this area, as well as being enjoyed by all, offered excellent opportunities to improve their speaking and listening skills and also promoted well children's understanding of how to keep safe. It was bonfire night and they were very clear about the need keep a safe distance from fireworks.
- Pupils with special educational needs are supported well. This helps them to participate fully in lessons and make the progress expected of them given their starting points and abilities.
- The attractive library is a popular resource in the school and promotes a love for reading very effectively. Older pupils in particular read widely and often and enjoy the books linked to their topics.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of most pupils in lessons, at lunchtime and around school is good. Pupils take a great pride in their school. They are kind, considerate and courteous to each other and to adults in the school.
- They feel safe and value the relationships they have with their teachers, the other adults in the school and each other. Pupils say that behaviour has improved and all are clear about the school rewards system. They understand the different sorts of bullying and say that instances are rare. If incidents do occur, they trust the adults to sort these out quickly and fairly.
- Pupils have good attitudes towards their learning, talk enthusiastically about their lessons and are keen to do well. They enjoy working together in pairs and in small groups and do this sensibly, making sure they listen carefully to each other.
- On the occasions when pupils lose concentration or become restless, it is usually because the pace of learning is not quick enough or the level of challenge in lessons is not high enough to meet their needs and so fully retain their attention.
- A few pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour are supported effectively by the adults to achieve this, and as a result little learning time is lost.
- Pupils understand the importance of an active, healthy lifestyle and enjoy the regular opportunities provided for them to take part in sports and other extra-curricular activities, provided through the school budget and additional Primary School Sport funding.
- Pupils play an active role in the life of the school and feel that their contributions are valued. Members of the school council and eco-group contribute well to the decision-making process in

the school. Some pupils also have the opportunity to lead the learning of others. For example, a Year 5 pupil runs a popular lunchtime computer club for other pupils. Their current project is to build a website and all are keen to succeed and work together well.

- The need for good attendance has a high profile and attendance is broadly average.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Despite staffing difficulties experienced since the last inspection, the headteacher has been successful in maintaining stability and has driven the ongoing development of the skills of other leaders, including the governing body. This work is having a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements and demonstrates that the school has the capacity to continue to improve. However, too much still rests on the shoulders of the headteacher and leadership and management at the present time requires improvement.
- The regular checks made on pupils' progress and the quality of teaching carried out by the headteacher are rigorous and robust. The results are reported to governors and are used to quickly to identify any pupils at risk of underachieving, to secure appropriate training for staff and to support decisions about any advancement in pay.
- Senior and subject leaders are becoming more skilful at reviewing aspects of the school's work. However, these skills need further development, for example, when identifying what needs to be improved in lessons, to enable all leaders to contribute fully to the ongoing drive to raise pupils' achievement and improve the quality of teaching further.
- The school's view of its own performance is accurate and the school's strategic plan is well focused on the correct priorities for improvement.
- The curriculum has improved since the last inspection and brings subjects together into interesting and increasingly creative topics. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils say how much they enjoy their lessons. Visits, including residential trips, visitors and well-attended after-school clubs all add rich experiences for pupils. Staff plan regular opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their literacy, numeracy and communications skills in their topic work. The breakfast-club provides a good start to the day.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum meets children's needs extremely well. It is very well planned and frequently adapted as a result of ongoing observations of children's progress and interests and extends children's learning well through imaginative play.
- Parents who spoke to inspectors and the school's own questionnaires indicate that they hold positive views of the school and appreciate the care provided for their children.
- Well-targeted training, including the development of senior and subject leaders, and support are provided for the school by the local authority. The local authority uses the expertise of the headteacher as a statutory assessment moderator for Key Stage 2 writing within a local school cluster.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have continued to develop their skills since the previous inspection and have a good understanding of how well the school is doing and are clear about what it needs to do to improve further. They are well informed, gain first-hand experience of school life and participate regularly in various forms of training. The governing body checks how pupil premium funding is spent and makes sure it is making a difference to those pupils who are eligible. Money from the new Primary School Sports funding, which is provided to enable pupils to become more active and follow healthy lifestyles, has been allocated appropriately. Governors are aware of the performance of teaching staff. They have full confidence in the headteacher and monitor her performance carefully. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105003
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	426074

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	171
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vida Wilson
Headteacher	Claire Temple
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2012
Telephone number	0151 677 3231
Fax number	0151 678 5478
Email address	schooloffice@sandbrook.wirral.sch.uk

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Fender Primary School

New Hey Road, Woodchurch, Wirral, Merseyside, CH49 8HB

Inspection dates 12-13 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher has high ambitions for pupils' personal development and academic achievement. Well supported by governors, staff and leaders at all levels, she is driving improvements. The school is improving.
- The school's commitment to ensuring all pupils equally succeed is strong. All pupils achieve well, and some outstandingly so, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is improving faster than the national rate by the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils making or exceeding expected progress is in line and sometimes above the national average, particularly in writing.
- Teaching is now good with some outstanding.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe. They enjoy good relationships with all staff. Their attendance is improving.
- The school promotes pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the range of topics studied and activities provided.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough opportunities are provided for the sharing of outstanding practice that exists within the school.
- Targets for pupils in Years 1 and 2 are not high enough to bring them closer to national averages by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils are not consistently given enough opportunities to work independently in lessons.
- Throughout the school, pupils are not given time to regularly practise correcting their spellings and punctuation.
- Teachers do not consistently insist on accuracy when pupils present mathematical information in different ways. Pupils do not consistently use and understand mathematical terms in their work.
- Attendance needs to improve further so that it is closer to the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors made 15 visits to lessons.
- There were not enough responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to register. However, responses to a parental questionnaire recently carried out by the school were analysed and a meeting was held with a group of parents.
- A meeting was held with a group of pupils and inspectors spoke to pupils at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors also held discussions with three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and school staff.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' current progress, documents relating to the school's plans for improvement, its procedures for checking the quality of teaching, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Pupils' books were checked by inspectors.

Inspection team

Clarice Nelson-Rowe, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Hilary Ward	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is well above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- On behalf of the local authority, the governing body manages two specially resourced provision bases, called Education Inclusion Bases. They provide long- and short-term placements for pupils with a statement of special educational needs from other primary schools across the local authority. They cater for pupils with a range of behavioural difficulties. Currently, they are providing for seven pupils in one base for younger pupils up to Year 3. In the other base, they cater for nine pupils from Years 4 to 6.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is well above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the overall quality of teaching to outstanding, in order to raise achievement further by:
 - increasing the opportunities for teachers to share outstanding teaching with one another
 - setting more rigorous targets for pupils in Years 1 and 2 in order to raise their attainment further by the end of Year 2
 - providing more opportunities in lessons for pupils to work independently
 - giving time for pupils to regularly check and correct spellings and punctuation in their work
 - ensuring pupils use and understand mathematical terms and present mathematical data accurately in their work.
- Improve attendance rates further, so that they are much closer to the national average by:
 - continuing to remind parents about the importance of their children's regular attendance
 - checking the effectiveness of the most recent strategies introduced in order to further adapt or change them.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Progress is now good throughout the school. This is because the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection.
- Children start the Reception Year with skills which are often much lower than those typically expected for their age. As a result of strong links with parents and a local nursery, Reception staff know the children well and ensure that they plan to meet their individual needs. Children enter Year 1 with skills which are typically below those expected for their age, but have made good progress from their different starting points.
- Pupils make faster rates of improvement than nationally, in attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. However, attainment remains below the national average except most recently, in mathematics. This is due to low starting points, but also to targets that are not set high enough, to ensure that pupils reach much closer to the national average.
- Progress in Years 3 to 6 is improving strongly, particularly in writing. The proportion of pupils who make expected and better than expected progress, is at least in line and now often above national figures.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils make faster improvement in their attainment than nationally, in reading, writing and mathematics. Overall attainment is now broadly average. These levels of attainment represent good and sometimes outstanding progress from below and often well-below individual starting points. However, Year 6 pupils' attainment in the new measure of English, grammar and punctuation, is below average.
- A key strength in writing throughout the school is the care that is taken by pupils to present their work with good attention to handwriting across a range of subjects. They also show good interest in the range of topics given to inspire them to write, such as describing trips they have been on, studying the history of the local area or reflecting on how to overcome difficulties in their lives. However, they are not given enough opportunity to regularly practise checking and correcting their spellings and punctuation.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. Younger pupils are increasingly able to recall tricky words and tackle unfamiliar words well. This is due to an improving understanding of the relationship between letters and the sounds they make. Their results in national reading tests are improving. Older pupils show good understanding of what they read and enjoy reading a range of books.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics. They enjoy problem-solving activities in class where they get to use a range of methods and thinking skills. However, sometimes pupils' work is not accurate in the way they present information, such as from surveys. They do not explain, or use important mathematical terms enough.
- The school demonstrates an excellent commitment to ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils. The school uses the pupil premium as well as funding for special educational needs provision well. Pupils are regularly taught in small teaching groups and in groups set by ability in English and mathematics, to ensure that their specific needs are being met. All pupils, including the small numbers of the most-able pupils and those who do not have special educational needs, benefit well from this provision and make good progress.
- Pupils in the Educational Inclusion Bases achieve as well as others in the school and sometimes better, including when they are compared to others in the school who are disabled pupils and have special educational needs. Sometimes progress is outstanding for these pupils in some year groups and in some subjects such as reading and mathematics, in light of some very low starting points.
- In 2013, most pupils were supported by the pupil premium and known to be eligible for free school meals in Year 6. Although this makes direct comparisons of their attainment with the very few pupils who were not eligible unreliable, their attainment was in line with similar pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. School data and inspection evidence show that currently throughout the school, there are few gaps between the progress of pupils supported

by the pupil premium and that of others.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good and sometimes outstanding. Common features include clear routines in lessons, positive relationships between teachers and pupils, and skilful use of questioning to assess pupils' learning. Teachers and teaching assistants are highly skilled in supporting and planning for the specific needs of all pupils.
- Helped by the setting of groups based on ability and need in English and mathematics, lessons provide appropriate levels of challenge for pupils and move on at a lively pace, so that pupils are attentive and interested throughout. Small class sizes enable teachers to check pupils' work regularly and have more time to support pupils individually. As a result pupils make better than expected rates of progress.
- A real strength in teaching is the way that topics and activities are organised to promote strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development throughout all year groups in the school. For example, pupils are stimulated to learn and write about the lives of influential people from different cultures and what they have achieved. Most impressively, in Year 5, after studying the life of a mountaineer, pupils were encouraged, through their writing, to reflect on the 'mountains' in their personal lives and how they have overcome them.
- Teaching in the Educational Inclusion Bases is good. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and standards of work. Classrooms are well organised. For younger pupils, the use of the outdoor environment helps them to continue learning through play.
- The feedback teachers give to pupils about their work has improved well since the previous inspection. Comments on work give clear guidance to pupils on what to do to reach higher levels in their learning. Although teachers rightly identify mistakes in pupils' work, pupils are not given enough opportunities to regularly check for their own spelling and punctuation mistakes, and then correcting them.
- The outdoor environment is used well, for example by the Reception class, where children were observed naming, counting and recording the different shapes they see in the toys and grounds around them.
- Many opportunities are provided for pupils to solve mathematical problems and to discuss them in class, across a range of topics they study. However, sometimes teachers do not consistently ensure pupils understand and use mathematical terms correctly, and that they accurately present mathematical information accurately.
- Teachers ensure pupils work well together. However, not enough opportunities are given for pupils to learn independently where they are more than capable of doing so.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good overall in the school. Although they readily admit that they sometimes have problems with a small minority of pupils, they say that learning usually takes place uninterrupted across the school.
- Pupils who have been in the school since the last inspection say that behaviour has improved well. This is due to good management of behaviour by staff and positive rewards and encouragement. Records on pupils' behaviour indicate that incidents, including exclusions, have significantly fallen.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They show interest in their work and respond quickly to instructions in class. Pupils with behavioural needs, particularly those in the Educational Inclusion Bases, are given good levels of additional support. The school can point to good improvements over time for such pupils.
- Prefects help to look after younger pupils and help to establish orderly entry into and from the playgrounds during break and lunch times.

- Pupils play well together and get on well with staff. They feel safe from bullying and have a good understanding of different types of safety, including internet safety.
- Conversations with parents as well as the school's most recent parental survey indicate that parents are supportive of the school and with the way that behaviour is managed and improving.
- The school has worked hard to improve attendance using a variety of strategies. This includes working with support staff to liaise more actively with families and to encourage the regular attendance of specific groups of pupils. However, although attendance is improving, it is still below the national average.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher constantly looks for ways of further improving pupils' achievement, personal development and well-being. Staff are constantly challenged but well supported. Staff morale is high.
- Governors, leaders at all levels and staff have tackled weaknesses with determination. Teaching, pupils' behaviour and achievement have been improving well since the last inspection. The school has a strong capacity to build on its good practice and to sustain improvements.
- Although leaders have not yet secured teaching of a consistently outstanding quality, the rigorous and varied checks made on the quality of teaching, and well-focused training delivered by subject leaders, have helped to improve the quality of teaching to consistently good. However, not enough of the outstanding practice within the school is shared.
- Teachers are held to account for the progress the pupils in their classes make and arrangements to check the performance of teachers are fully in place, thorough and clearly linked to salary progression.
- The leadership of Educational Inclusion Bases is good, leading to good and sometimes outstanding achievement of pupils.
- The local authority provided effective support for the school soon after its last inspection and accurately judged how well it has been doing. More recently, owing to the confidence in the quality of leadership at all levels in the school, the local authority now only provides minimal support, while still responding when asked for advice or guidance by the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governance of the school is good. Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and have been appropriately trained to analyse and interpret performance data in order to check on whether pupils are learning as best as they can. As a result they are able to provide good challenge as well as support to the school. Governors understand how the system to check the performance of staff is helping to improve the quality of teaching, and ensure that salary increases and promotions are only awarded to staff when they have met their targets. Governors ensure that financial management is matched well to improving pupils' achievement and the impact is carefully scrutinised. For example, they know the difference that the pupil-premium funding is making through the targeted teaching programmes for literacy and numeracy. They are also aware of the impact of the Primary School Sports funding on improving the teaching of physical education, for example, using a specialist teacher to coach staff to teach pupils new skills, for example, in gymnastics.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105039
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	426075

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	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gill Curry
Headteacher	Louise Seargeant
Date of previous school inspection	12 September 2011
Telephone number	0151 6770425
Fax number	0151 6770426
Email address	school@fender.wirral.sch.uk

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Moreton Christ Church CofE Primary School

Upton Road, Moreton, Wirral, Merseyside , CH46 0PB

Inspection dates 19–20 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress from their different starting points as they move through the school. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average and this demonstrates pupils' good achievement from their starting points on entry to the school. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.
- Pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to learning help them to make good progress. They enjoy school, get on well with one another and work hard. They feel safe in school. Attendance is average and improving in the current year.
- The quality of teaching is good. Some is outstanding. Teachers manage pupils well and their expectations are high. The overall quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection.
- Leadership and management of the school have also improved. There is very strong governance. Leaders at all levels have an accurate picture of how well the school is doing. Teaching and learning are managed well and this has helped to bring the improved progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching to judge the quality outstanding overall. Pupils' use of technology in lessons to help their learning and the effectiveness of teachers' marking are aspects that could be improved.
- Standards in mathematics could be higher. Pupils do not use their mathematical knowledge and skills sufficiently in different ways and in different subjects. Sometimes, work in lessons is not challenging enough and does not meet the different learning needs of pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 lessons or part lessons.
- Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body, pupils, parents and a representative from the local authority
- Also taken into account were the views of 19 parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and examined a wide range of documentation including: national assessment data and the school’s own assessments; recent external reports on the school’s work; the school’s own view of its performance; minutes of governing body meetings; samples of pupils’ work and safeguarding documents.

Inspection team

Kevin Johnson, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Terry Bond	Additional Inspector
Patricia Cope	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average sized primary school in which almost all pupils are White British.
- A broadly average proportion of pupils are supported by school action.
- The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- An average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school currently receives light touch support from the local authority.
- Before and after-school care is provided on site. This provision is not managed by the governing body. The provision receives a separate inspection and a separate report, which is available on the Ofsted website.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching across all subjects in order to improve the overall quality of classroom practice by:
 - giving pupils more opportunities to use technology in lessons to help them to learn and improve their skills in working on their own
 - using the skills of teaching assistants to ensure pupils begin their practical work early in the lesson, so that learning time is used to the full
 - making sure that teachers' marking gives pupils clear information about their progress and also examples of how to improve their work
 - checking to see that the guidance they give pupils about their work is followed up.
- Improve standards in mathematics at both key stages by:
 - planning more opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical knowledge and skills in different subjects
 - making sure that there is appropriate challenge in all lessons, in order to meet pupils' different learning needs.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils enter Reception from a large number of pre-school settings and their skills and knowledge are below the expectations for their age. During the Reception year they make good progress, especially in their personal, social and emotional development, which helps them become ready to learn. Currently and as in previous years, most children are on track to reach a good level of development and to be ready to face the challenges of Year 1.
- Since the previous inspection there has been an intense focus in the school on accelerating pupils' progress. Assessment systems and the use of assessments have tightened up considerably to give an accurate step-by-step picture of the performance of every pupil. This has resulted in an improving trend of progress through the school.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 make good progress from their starting points and standards in reading writing and mathematics have improved. In the Phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) Screening Check for Year 1 the proportion reaching the expected standard has risen considerably. This is reflected in the improved standards reached in reading at the end of Year 1 and Year 2.
- Performance in Key Stage 2 has also improved since the previous inspection. In both 2012 and 2013, pupils reached average standards in English and mathematics from below average attainment at the end of Year 2. This demonstrates good progress, especially in writing, from their starting points.
- Indeed, standards in English have risen considerably. Attainment and achievement in mathematics have improved too, but standards could still be higher. The school recognises that planning could ensure pupils are given more opportunities to apply their mathematical skills across the curriculum.
- Pupils enjoy and are enthusiastic about reading. As one younger pupil said, 'It's the most important thing we do in school.' In Year 2, pupils love to talk about their favourite books and the story characters they like. They read regularly at home and in school. Pupils know the difference between fiction and non-fiction writing and use their phonics skills well to tackle unfamiliar words. Most –able pupils read fluently and accurately even when seeing a book for the first time.
- By the end of Year 6 the vast majority of pupils have made at least expected and often better progress in reading. Pupils read confidently and with good understanding and expression. They have little difficulty with unfamiliar words. They have a good knowledge of the works of current authors and select their reading from a wide range.
- Challenge for the most –able pupils is good, and their progress is increasing. Year 6 pupils for example could clearly explain the mathematics of rotating angles on a grid at the end of their lesson. Year 4 pupils learned to read different measures for litres and kilograms, using their decimal notation to get the precise measures. In the 2013 tests more pupils achieved the higher levels 3 and 5 than previously. Occasionally more could be expected of most –able pupils in Key Stage 1 classes.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. A good range of testing is used to identify pupils' specific needs. That allows teachers to plan closely for the learning of each individual. The school works effectively with outside agents and parents to address pupils' needs. This good level of support has a positive impact on pupils' academic and personal development.
- The impact of pupil premium spending is good and spending is adjusted to meet individual needs for example, by providing one-to-one tuition for mathematics. Gaps in attainment gaps are closing and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals are beginning to reach broadly the same standards as other pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- There is now more consistency in the quality of teaching as a result of the school's continuous drive to improve its quality. Some is now outstanding. Local authority evaluations and the school's own records show how it has improved and its subsequent impact on pupils' progress. Indeed, inspection evidence, including lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work confirms that teaching is now good.
- Pupils learn well because they enjoy lessons. They work well with partners or in groups and are not afraid to ask questions because they know that their ideas are valued by teachers.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good and their particular passion for a topic rubs off well on the pupils. In a history lesson about the Titanic, for example, Year 3 pupils were truly captivated by the story, asked a lot of sensible questions and gained excellent historical knowledge and insight about the event.
- Literacy and mathematics are taught well. The range of pupils' writing is good and includes a good measure of poetry. Writing is linked well to other subjects. Pupils benefit from their ability grouping for mathematics in Key Stage 2, but there is sometimes an insufficient level of challenge in mathematics in Key Stage 1. A highly successful scheme to boost pupils' basic mathematics skills is well established and pupils who receive this intensive support make rapid progress.
- There is usually good pace to pupils' learning because planning builds well on what they have done before. Teachers' expectations are high. For most pupils the challenge is good. Teachers assess pupils' performance accurately and check their learning during lessons to make sure they are making the progress they should.
- Teaching assistants contribute well to the teaching team. They know pupils well and have their respect because of the sensitive way in which they deal with pupils' particular learning and pastoral needs. There are occasions when their skills could be better used to get pupils started more quickly on practical learning rather than have them marking time on the carpet.
- Some imaginative methods are used to help pupils focus on their learning and some practical resources are used well. Teachers make good use of electronic whiteboards, and opportunities for pupils to discuss problems with a partner all feature in lessons. Pupils' use of technology to help them learn, however, is a weakness and this also reduces opportunities for pupils to take charge and learn on their own.
- There are inconsistencies in marking quality. While there is some good marking, particularly in literacy, pupils are not always given the clearest guidance about how to improve. There are missed opportunities to model correct work and for pupils to correct errors. In short, there is not enough rigour in marking across different subjects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to learning underpin their good achievement. They enjoy school and recognise its importance saying, 'It prepares us for our future life.' The many after-school clubs are well attended and pupils like especially the opportunities for sports, dance, music and drama.
- They feel positive about the level of their behaviour, as do parents who have few concerns about how the school manages their children and fosters their good personal development. Pupils know how to adjust their behaviour for different occasions such as in assemblies or more informal times in the dining room.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and physical development is good. It is nurtured by the strong Christian values of the school. Pupils are mindful of each other, always friendly and keen to help. They show respect for others' different backgrounds and circumstances and contribute generously to several charities. They listen carefully to their teachers and are very polite and well mannered.
- Pupils have no concerns about their safety in school. They feel very well cared for and say that

there is no bullying or offensive name-calling. They have good understanding of different types of bullying including that linked to the internet and mobile phones. They are aware of some of the potential dangers outside school. Older pupils accompany members of the governing body when they carry out their risk assessments of the school premises.

- Pupils contribute well to the everyday life of the school. The school council canvasses ideas for improvements from pupils so that they all have a voice. The eco committee act as guardians of the school's use of energy and various daily tasks carried out conscientiously by pupils help things to run smoothly.
- By the time pupils leave the school they are confident of their abilities and well prepared socially and emotionally for the next stages in their education.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is entirely focused on driving the school forward. His thoughtful and determined leadership has brought good improvement since the previous inspection. Earlier support from the local authority quickly established that the school were on the right track for improvement. The vision was clearly shared with all staff and governors, and their combined efforts have successfully moved the school from satisfactory to good.
- A crucial part of this process has been the moulding of the effective senior leadership team. Responsibilities and accountabilities are clear. Its members work as a strong team to check on the work of the school and gain an accurate picture of how well it is doing. The school's record of improvement is such that the local authority now sees the school as able to improve on its own and offers only very light support when needed.
- The management and improvement of teaching and learning has been central to the school's success. All staff members have rallied to meet the high expectations of the Teachers' Standards document which now underpins teachers' performance management. Lesson observations by senior leaders are backed up by focused target setting for teachers' performance. This leads to planned training to improve their skills and, subsequently, pupils' progress. Teachers are aware that salary increases are linked directly to their successes in the classroom.
- The leadership and management of subjects is good. This aspect, too, has been a focus for improvement since the previous inspection. Subject leaders already have action plans for the introduction of the new primary curriculum in September 2014. Currently, the way pupils record their literacy work has been successfully revised in order to promote better links between subjects, but this positive action has not been extended to mathematics. There is good breadth to the curriculum, which includes learning Italian, and a good selection of after school clubs to help pupils develop skills and physical well-being.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance of the school is an outstanding feature of leadership and management. The level of expertise among governors, and their ambition for the school, means that no stone is left unturned in their analysis of the school's performance and in holding it to account.
- Governors check the progress of individual pupils and match this against use of the pupil premium in their determination to provide equality of opportunity. The allocated sports funding for primary schools is used to motivate pupils in sport and improve their well-being. Teachers also increase their skills by working alongside specialist coaches so they can continue to provide good quality teaching in the subject.
- The governing body is aware of the overall quality of teaching in the school and how it is linked to the salaries structure. It knows how and why the school has improved and what it must do to become outstanding. Finances are managed expertly and other responsibilities such as policy reviews are managed efficiently. Safeguarding policies and practice meet all statutory requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
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Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
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School details

Unique reference number	105076
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	426076

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	363
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Cousins
Headteacher	Ian Thomson
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2011
Telephone number	0151 677 5152
Fax number	0151 678 8165
Email address	headteacher@christchurch-moreton.wirral.sch.uk

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Thingwall Primary School

Pensby Road, Thingwall, Wirral, Merseyside, CH61 7UG

Inspection dates 22–23 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2013 was significantly below average in reading and mathematics and overall performance was not as good as in the previous years.
- The overall progress made by pupils by the time they left Year 6 in 2013 was average, and not as good as in previous years, particularly in mathematics.
- Too few pupils attain the higher levels, particularly at Key Stage 1, and girls' performance lags behind that of boys at Key Stage 2.
- Improvements in pupils' progress so far this year are not consistent across all year-groups, or subjects.
- Teachers sometimes give pupils work that is too easy and this means that few pupils make as much progress as they should during lessons, especially the most able.
- School leaders, including governors are yet to fully implement or evaluate plans aimed at raising levels of attainment and improving the quality of teaching.
- Many of the school's middle management team are new to their posts. Their work has yet to fully impact on raising levels of achievement across the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' behaviour is good, as is their attendance. They enjoy coming to school, and are 'excited' about their learning.
- Pupils' overall performance in writing is good across the school, and is above average by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils' achievement is improving as a result of improvements to teaching.
- The headteacher, governors and newly formed senior leadership team are determined to improve the school and have an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses.
- The quality of pupils' reading is rapidly improving, as is the teaching of phonics because the school has given a higher profile to the teaching of phonics and ensured that teachers are well trained.
- The school's middle leaders work together well and are clear about their school improvement roles.
- The overwhelming majority of parents are very complimentary about the school. They say that it meets their children's specific educational needs and keeps them safe.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons, including parts of lessons, as well as the teaching of small groups of pupils and sessions aimed at helping pupils to learn to read through understanding the links between letters and the sounds they make (phonics teaching). Two lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read from Years 2, 3, 4, and 6, and held discussions with pupils from across the school. Pupils' work in books was scrutinised during lessons and separately.
- Inspectors took account of 26 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) as well as the school's own surveys of parents' views.
- A meeting took place with a representative from the local authority school improvement service.
- A meeting was held with seven governors, including the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body.
- Various school documents were examined. These included data on pupils' progress, external school evaluations, records of the school's checks on the quality of teaching, minutes of the governing body's meetings, the school's development plan and review of its own performance, records of pupils' attendance, behaviour records and safeguarding documentation.

Inspection team

Lenford White, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Elaine White

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium is well below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority.
- The school has a small proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. A few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Most teachers are new to the school since the last inspection. Two teachers, one newly qualified in the Reception class and the other in Year 6, who is also acting deputy headteacher, started at the school this term. The majority of governors have been at the school since the last inspection, with at least one being recently appointed.
- There is privately run pre-school and after-school provision which is housed on the school site. Both are subject to separate inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to consistently good or better by making sure that:
 - all teachers provide work that stretches pupils to do their very best, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Raise levels of achievement for all pupils by:
 - providing as many opportunities as possible for pupils to practise their reading and mathematics writing skills across the curriculum in Key Stage 1, and their mathematics skills across the curriculum in Key Stage 2
 - focusing on closing the gaps in attainment between boys and girls
 - ensuring that more pupils attain the higher levels, particularly at Key Stage 1.
- Improve further the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governors, by:
 - ensuring that all plans aimed at raising levels of attainment and improving the quality of teaching are fully implemented and evaluated
 - ensuring that the middle management team is fully supported in its work, and provided with appropriate training to enable it to effectively execute its various roles.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children enter Reception with skills and abilities which are broadly in line with those expected for their age. They progress well and most achieve a good level of development by the time they enter Year 1. However, achievement requires improvement because too few pupils make good or better progress through Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Too few pupils attained the higher levels at the end of in Key Stage 1 in 2013, and their performance was well below average in reading and mathematics. Pupils' overall achievement in Key Stage 2 in 2013 was not as good as in previous years, particularly in mathematics.
- However, the school has taken decisive action to remedy pupils' poor achievement, by, for example, appointing a specialist mathematics teacher in Year 6 and improving the quality of teaching across the school.
- Standards in phonics have improved and were broadly at national levels in 2013. Year 2 and 3 pupils who read for inspectors could identify a number of authors and genres and said that they enjoyed reading. Less-able readers demonstrated a good ability to use their phonic knowledge to break-up, sound-out and read unfamiliar words.
- The school regularly assesses how well pupils are doing and has developed a wide range of support programmes which are tailored , for example, to improve pupils' spelling, writing and the social and emotional aspects of their learning.
- The school has few pupils who are supported through the pupil premium, however, their progress is monitored closely and support provided when needed. Currently, there is no significant gap between this group and their peers in school, or similar groups of pupils nationally.
- Because there were too few pupils from minority ethnic groups or with English as an additional language at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 in 2013, it is not possible to provide a meaningful analysis of their performance. Current data indicate that their progress is as good as their classmates.
- Equality of opportunity is improving, particularly for girls. The school's current data indicate that previous gaps between the performance of boys and girls in Year 6 in 2013 are narrowing. The school's close monitoring of the performance of girls and providing booster sessions in mathematics for those who need them, is helping to improve their performance.
- The school has identified pupils most likely to attain the higher levels in Year 6 at the end of the academic year and provides greater levels of support though small-group activities and more challenging tasks in lessons.
- All teachers have a detailed understanding of the academic, emotional and social needs of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. The standard achieved by these pupils by the time they left at the end of Year 6 in 2013 was above average.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although the majority of lessons observed during the inspection were good, and teaching is improving, it is still judged to require improvement overall because pupils' achievement over time is not good enough, and progress is uneven across year-groups.
- Teachers generally use information on pupils' past performance well; however, this is not always the case. In some lessons, the work pupils are given is too easy, which means that few make as much progress as they should during the lesson, particularly the most able.
- In two lessons observed in Key Stage 1, teaching required improvement because there was too little variation in the work that pupils were asked to do. As a result, progress for some groups of pupils was not good enough, particularly for higher attainers who were not fully engaged in their learning.

- While there are many opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills across the curriculum, these are yet to be fully developed with regard to mathematics and reading.
- Pupils are very knowledgeable about their learning. Almost all pupils, particularly those in Key Stage 2, know how well they are doing in English and mathematics, and most can say what they need to do to improve.
- Overall, the quality of the marking of pupils' work is good. However, there are too few examples of pupils improving their work as a result of teachers' advice.
- In most lessons, teachers and teaching assistants are quick to identify signs of any pupils who are falling behind. When this happens, they carefully tailor work so that it engages and challenges all pupils to make increasingly good progress.
- Specialist teachers and well-trained teaching assistants work very effectively in providing targeted one-to-one support for various pupils, including the most able. School records show that these pupils are now beginning to make better progress.
- Relationships between pupils and adults in the Early Years Foundation Stage are especially strong. Pupils get off to a good start in a very stimulating environment in which teachers and other adults provide opportunities for them to explore various areas of learning and progress at a good rate.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge was well demonstrated in a good Year 5 English lesson where pupils, including the least able, gave eloquent examples of their own similes and metaphors based on *The Highway Man*.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Pupils enjoy coming to school; this is evidenced by their good attendance. They say that the best things about their school include their teachers, friends and lessons. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. They are proud to talk to visitors about their work and say that they feel part of a community. Pupils take pride in wearing their school uniform, and conduct themselves well during lunchtimes.
- Pupils' behaviour is not better than good because occasionally they are 'off-task' during lessons. This is mostly likely to happen when work is not sufficiently engaging. At such times their attitudes towards learning are not as positive as they could be. Teachers work very effectively to help pupils to develop their understanding of discrimination and prejudice. Older pupils who spoke to inspectors were very clear that nobody should be treated unfairly on the basis of 'their colour, religion or because of who they love'.
- Pupils are very respectful towards their teachers, all adults and each other. In a celebration assembly they behaved exceptionally well as they listened intently to the headteacher as she awarded special certificates to acknowledge pupils' good achievement.
- Pupils insist that behaviour is almost always good. The vast majority of parents, as well as school staff, are also of this view. School records also support this view.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Younger pupils are adamant that bullying is rare. They say that they are very confident in talking to adults about any concerns that they have and that these are always taken seriously and dealt with immediately.
- Pupils say that they learn about safety issues in personal, social and health education (SEAL) and from visitors such as the police, ambulance service and firefighters.
- Pupils have a good understanding of 'e-safety'. When asked for tips on how to stay safe while using the internet pupils agreed that 'if you come across anything that you should not see minimise it, close it, then tell a teacher' and 'never pretend to be older than you are'.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The headteacher knows exactly what needs to be done in order to move the school forward, and has the drive and determination to ensure that she succeeds. Supported by an active governing

body, and a new senior leadership team, the headteacher has taken decisive action to improve the quality of teaching. The school ensures that teachers' performance is directly linked to salary progression.

- All staff who completed the inspection questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the school and indicated that they were fully aware of what needs to be done in order to secure further improvements.
- However, leadership and management still require improvement because until recently pupils' achievement at Key Stage 1 was below average, and their progress through Key Stage 2 was not good enough given their starting points.
- The school's middle management team has a clear, shared understanding about what needs to be done in order to raise standards across the school. The team's clearly focused action plans have, for example, helped to improve reading and phonics across the school. However, most middle managers are new to their roles and their work has yet to improve standards in all year-groups or in all curriculum areas.
- The school ensures that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong through its links with, for example, schools in India and Norway. The school makes effective use of additional sports funding to enhance opportunities for pupils to participate in sport and to develop teachers' skills in the subject.
- The school works very closely with the local authority school improvement service which has recently reviewed teaching and learning and provided training for governors in a number of areas, including data analysis.
- Safeguarding procedures are followed closely and meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are both committed to and knowledgeable about the school. However, governors' precise knowledge of how well individual groups of pupils are performing or how they compare with similar groups of pupils nationally requires improvement.
 - Governors ensure that teachers only secure promotion or pay awards if they meet their performance targets, all of which are linked to pupils' achievement. They have taken decisive action to improve the quality of teaching; the work of their recently appointed mathematics specialist teacher, for example, is already helping to raise levels of achievement. Governors know how the pupil premium is spent, and that the tailored support and one-to-one activities that entitled pupils receive is helping to improve their progress.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105051
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	432397

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	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Wallace
Headteacher	Danielle Cronin
Date of previous school inspection	11 May 2011
Telephone number	0151 648 4885
Fax number	0151 648 2507
Email address	schooloffice@thingwall.wirral.sch.uk

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St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Birkenhead

Woodchurch Road, Prenton, Merseyside, CH43 5UT

Inspection dates 21–22 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- Not enough pupils make sufficiently rapid progress in Key Stage 1. Too few pupils, including the most able, do well enough in writing in Key Stage 2.
- Teaching has not been good enough to ensure pupils make consistently good progress between Years 1 and 6.
- Marking does not consistently tell pupils what they must do to improve their work or closely link with pupils' learning targets.
- Some teachers do not expect enough of pupils and what they can achieve, particularly the most able, nor how pupils present their work.
- Planned actions to raise pupils' achievement and improve teaching are not rigorous enough and do not focus sufficiently on the standards pupils reach.
- School leaders' assessment of the school's performance is not thorough enough.
- The checks made on pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics are not effective enough.
- Subject leaders are not given sufficient time and opportunity to check standards in their areas of responsibility.

The school has the following strengths

- Overall achievement in reading is outstanding. Pupils have a genuine love of reading and they read with confidence.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Pupils feel safe and well cared for by all adults in the school.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage because teaching is consistently good.
- The newly appointed headteacher has given high priority to improving the quality of teaching in order to raise standards. This drive for improvement is being well supported by the staff.
- Pupils develop good attitudes to learning.
- The school provides a wide range of opportunities to develop pupils' artistic, musical and sporting interests and talents.
- Governance is good and well-led.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons and two assemblies. They also listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, a small group of parents, members of the governing body, members of the school staff and senior leaders. A meeting was also held with a representative of the local authority and a telephone conversation took place between an inspector and the school's Education Quality School Improvement Associate.
- Inspectors also talked to pupils in their classes and on the playground.
- Inspectors took account of 89 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).
- A range of documents was considered, including the school's own analysis of how well it is doing, the school improvement plan, information about pupils' progress checks on the quality of teaching, minutes of governing body meetings, headteacher's reports and records relating to attendance, behaviour incidents and safeguarding.
- Inspectors also examined work in pupils' books. They observed the behaviour of pupils in their classrooms and around the school.

Inspection team

Peter Martin, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Michelle Ravey

Additional Inspector

Anthony Buckley

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Joseph's is an above-average-sized primary school catering for pupils from age three to 11.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is above that found in most schools. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium is lower than the national average. (This is the additional funding provided by the government for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after.)
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups, including those who are learning English as an additional language, is much smaller than that found nationally.
- There have been significant changes in the school leadership since the last inspection. The headteacher at the time of the last inspection left to take up a post with the local authority in July 2012. The deputy headteacher took on the role of acting headteacher and a senior teacher became acting deputy headteacher. The acting headteacher then retired in July 2013 and a new headteacher was appointed who took up his post in September 2013. The governing body is seeking to make a permanent appointment of a deputy headteacher.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to raise standards, particularly in writing, so that more pupils make more rapid progress by:
 - ensuring there is more consistent progress across year groups by sharing the best practice in the school
 - improving marking so that it consistently tells pupils how to improve their work and is more closely linked to their pupil targets
 - giving pupils time to correct their work and learn from their mistakes
 - setting consistent expectations of what pupils can achieve and ensuring that pupils, particularly the most able, are appropriately challenged and that they always present their work to the best of their ability.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that planned actions to raise pupils' achievement in school improvement plans and in the arrangements to improve teachers' performance management are clear and measurable
 - ensuring information about the school's performance is used more rigorously to provide school with an accurate view of how well it is doing
 - providing middle and subject leaders with the time and opportunity to check standards in their areas of responsibility more effectively.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because the progress made by pupils between Year 1 and Year 6 is uneven. Achievement in writing is too slow across both key stages and not enough pupils achieve the higher levels in Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Children enter nursery with skills and abilities which are well below those typical for their age. They make a good start in nursery and, because of well-planned activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage, they make good progress and the majority enter Key Stage 1 with skills and abilities which are broadly typical for their age. A small proportion does even better than this.
- In Key Stage 1 pupils make slower but steady progress and the majority make the progress expected of them. However, not enough of them make more rapid progress, particularly in writing, that would enable them to achieve the higher levels. Attainment in Key Stage 1 has been broadly at the national average, apart from a dip year in 2011, for the past five years.
- Progress in Key Stage 2 is mixed. After a dip in 2012, attainment returned to the levels of previous years. The proportion of pupils making the expected progress is in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion exceeding the expected progress is broadly in line for reading and mathematics but below in writing.
- The school's own information also shows that the progress made across the key stages is variable and for a significant proportion of classes, overall progress requires improvement.
- In 2011, the school focused on the teaching of reading and as a consequence, standards have risen over the past two years. In 2013, attainment was above the national average. Overall achievement in reading is outstanding and is a real strength of the school. Pupils read with confidence and enjoyment. However, progress in writing has been slower and attainment in both key stages and for most pupil groups is below the national average.
- The teaching of phonics (the linking of letters to their sounds) is good. The proportion of pupils achieving the required standard for Year 1 pupils, has been above the national average for the past two years. This is helping pupils to develop as confident readers.
- Last year the school focused on its approach to the teaching of mathematics. This resulted in a big improvement in pupils' attainment. In 2013, attainment above the national average which represents good progress for the pupils from their starting points.
- Well-targeted use of the pupil-premium funding has resulted in those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, making progress as good as that of other pupils in the school. The proportion of those pupils making the expected progress or exceeding it is in line with that seen nationally, except in writing. By the end of Key Stage 2 the gap between these and other pupils in the school has closed and in 2013, the attainment of pupils eligible for free school meals was in line with that of their peers in mathematics, one term behind in writing and two terms behind in reading.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs or disability is well managed. Well-targeted additional support is ensuring that they also are making good progress.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Much of the teaching seen during the inspection was good and only a small number of lessons required improvement. However, the quality of teaching in reading, writing and mathematics is uneven between Year 1 and Year 6 and requires improvement because it has not resulted in sustained good progress for pupils, particularly in writing.
- There has been a strong focus placed on improving the quality of teaching since the appointment of the new headteacher. An effective programme of lesson observations supported by additional training for teachers, with a sharp focus on the teaching of writing and the sharing of the best practice in the school, have resulted in an improving picture of teaching as shown by the progress made by pupils as seen in their books. However, it is too early to gauge the full

impact this is having on pupils' achievement.

- Although there is good practice evident across the whole school there is a lack of consistency in some key areas. Marking of pupils' work is generally up-to-date but it varies in quality from year to year and even across year groups. It does not always tell pupils how to improve their work. Pupils are not routinely given the time and opportunity to correct their work and learn from their mistakes or to reflect on and respond to their teachers' marking.
- Pupils do not always present their work to the best of their ability. This is because teachers do not expect enough of pupils.
- Pupils' targets are not used consistently. In some classes they are used very effectively. Pupils are reminded of their targets before they began their task and then asked to assess for themselves how successful they had been in achieving them by the end of the lesson. Where marking is most effective, there is a clear link between the pupils' targets and the marking of their work.
- Teachers generally display good subject knowledge. They plan well to provide lessons which pupils find interesting and help them move on in their learning. However, the work provided for some pupils, particularly the most able, does not always challenge them sufficiently.
- Generally, time is not wasted in lessons and this means pupils made good progress. However, in some lessons pupils are made to wait while other classmates finish the task before they can move on to the next activity. This results in wasted time and a slowing down of the pace of learning.
- Good use of praise and encouragement for pupils is a common feature of lessons. This makes pupils feel valued and eager to contribute to the lesson. Most lessons are linked well to what the pupils had learnt previously. Instructions are clear and pupils knew what they are learning and what they have to do. Teachers check on pupils' progress during the lesson to ensure that they are on task and making progress, or to question them further to develop their thinking and assess their understanding.
- In lessons when the learning is good, pupils are given the opportunity to think and work things out for themselves. In an outstanding lesson in Year 3, pupils devised their own investigations on magnets. Pupils worked with each other well and showed good negotiating skills. Little time was wasted and pupils were highly motivated to learn. Pupils told inspectors they enjoyed their learning most when 'it was interactive'. They said their teachers made lessons fun, 'They do games and you don't know you are learning.' They are keen to tell their parents what they have been learning about when they get home.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. There is an exciting range of activities for the children to choose and a good balance between activities led by an adult and activities pupils can choose for themselves. This ensures that they learn key skills while learning to explore and find things out for themselves. In one activity, children were listening to the story '*The Three Billy Goats Gruff*'. The children were asked to take on the role of the characters. This really brought the story to life. The children were completely engrossed in the story; their joy of learning was clear to see.
- The teaching of phonics is well organised and very effective. Sessions are lively and pupils make good progress. This is helping them to read and spell well.
- Teaching assistants are used effectively and make a big contribution to the learning of pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Behaviour in school is good. Pupils are courteous, polite and friendly. They open doors for adults unbidden, greet people cheerfully and are generally well-behaved in class, around the school and on the playground.
- Behaviour in a large majority of lessons is good and as a result, lessons run smoothly without disruption to learning. This is because teachers set consistently high expectations of behaviour and pupils are eager to learn and cooperate with their teachers. However, in the few lessons which required improvement, these expectations were not always fully maintained resulting in

some minor chattiness and inattentiveness by some pupils when the teacher was talking.

- Relationships are very good throughout the school. Pupils and teachers talk to each other nicely and with mutual respect. Pupils like their teachers, they think they are 'really good' and reasonable. 'They don't just tell you you shouldn't do something, they explain the reason why.'
- Pupils, parents and teachers are all agreed that it is a happy school and that behaviour is good. Pupils said that there used to be bullying a few years ago but that it is 'much better now'. They insisted that there was very little bullying in the school now and that on the rare occasions that incidents happen they are dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying including, for example, cyber-bullying. The school promotes this understanding through events such as its anti-bullying week, its assemblies and religious education programme.
- Detailed records of incidents, actions and follow up involving parents are kept by the school. These confirm that behaviour is managed well in the school. There have been no exclusions from the school in the past three years.
- The large majority of parents are very happy with the behaviour of the pupils and have confidence in the staff of the school.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is also good. Effective procedures and policies to ensure the safety of pupils are all in place.
- Pupils, parents and staff are all told inspectors agree that this is a happy school where the pupils feel safe and very well cared for by all the adults. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They are, for example, very aware of the dangers they can face when using the Internet. This is as a result of good teaching and events and activities, such as road safety talks, stranger danger and bikeability training.
- Attendance is good and has never been less than the national average for the past three years. It is currently above the national average.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The new headteacher has only been in post since September and not yet been able to fully implement plans for the checking and evaluation of the performance of the school. Further recruitment of a permanent deputy headteacher and the expansion of the school's leadership team are planned but not yet in place.
- Since taking up his appointment the headteacher has placed a strong emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and raising standards. This has been embraced by the teaching staff. He is clear what he wants and this is understood by all in the school.
- The headteacher has won the confidence of parents and staff. Parents feel listened to and can see the improvements made since he started in the school. They appreciate that the headteacher routinely meets and greets parents and pupils in the morning.
- Parents say that communications between school and home are much improved. The school has an informative website and a 'Meet the Teacher' event was introduced early in the autumn term. The curriculum was explained to parents who were also then given the opportunity to raise any concerns they had with their child's class teacher. Parents were very appreciative of this initiative.
- Checking the quality of lessons is linked to effective, well-targeted training opportunities for teachers and has been at the forefront of the early ways to bring about an improvement in standards.
- Arrangements to check the performance of teachers are in place and a clear link between teachers' performance and pay progression is established. However, objectives set for teachers to improve their performance tend to be too broad and generalised and do not provide clear and measurable targets for pupils' progress.
- The school has a comprehensive system to check on pupils' progress and identify any pupils who are falling behind. This enables the school to plan additional support for pupils or groups of pupils. Consequently, groups such as those identified for the pupil premium are making progress

that is at least as good as that of other pupils in the school. However, senior leaders are not using the data well enough to evaluate the school's overall performance.

- School self-evaluation has tended to be focused on attainment at the end of each key stage. The information is not being used as effectively as possible to evaluate standards and progress of pupils throughout the school. Hence, school self-evaluation is not as accurate as it could be.
- The plans for bringing about school improvement, established since September, building on the previous plan that was in place, have focused on the key priorities for raising standards. Although appropriate actions have been planned to bring about improvement, the targets set for achieving them are too general and do not enable school leaders and governors to measure their success in achieving them.
- The school provides a rich and varied range of subjects which stimulate pupils' interests. Pupils are given opportunities to develop their musical and artistic talents, such as through ukulele lessons. A visiting artist has helped pupils create three-dimensional portraits of figures from Tudor times. Visits to places such as Liverpool Science Museum further enrich the learning of pupils and the Year 6 pupils look forward to their residential stay at an outdoor adventure centre.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is a strong element of the life of the school. Pupils are taught to have respect for one another and to value each other's feelings. They learn Spanish throughout the school and find out about other cultures and other religions. This helps pupils to develop an understanding and respect for other people's beliefs and cultures.
- The additional sports funding provided by the government has enabled the school to create links with Tranmere Rovers and Bebington Sports College. Year 6 pupils enjoyed an education day at the football club where they participated in sports activity and learnt how sport can help them live healthy lives. Sports specialists provide coaching for the pupils and in-service training for the teachers. Regular after-school sports clubs contribute to pupils' health and well-being.
- The local authority has provided the school with light-touch support in the past.
- Equal opportunities are at the heart of the school's work. The school ensures that no pupil is denied the opportunities the school provides.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The school has an able governing body which is well-led and highly committed to the school. Governors check teachers' performance and pupils' achievement paying particular attention to the progress made by pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. They ensure that there is a strong link between teachers' performance and pay progression. They are fully aware of the school's priorities and check for themselves how well the school is doing. They recruit people to the governing body that can contribute key skills and seek further training to enable them to carry out their duties more effectively. School finances are managed efficiently.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105092
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	440427

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	464
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Annette Roberts, JP
Headteacher	Paul Davenport
Date of previous school inspection	28 September 2010
Telephone number	0151 6526781
Fax number	0151 6701843
Email address	schooloffice@stjosephs-birkenhead.wirral.sch.uk

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St George's Primary School

St George's Road, Wallasey, Merseyside, CH45 3NF

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- By the end of Key Stage 2 the attainment of pupils in English and mathematics is well above the national average.
- Pupils are making better progress than in the past. Progress is now good across both key stages in all subjects.
- Well-directed support enables disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to achieve well.
- The progress of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is similar to that of other pupils in school.
- Teaching is good overall and outstanding in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the next steps in their learning as a result of high-quality marking.
- Pupils take great care to produce work which is neat and well organised.
- The standard of homework is outstanding and contributes much to the present levels of achievement.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and proud of their school.
- The curriculum is well planned and provides pupils with many opportunities to improve their writing.
- Leadership is strong at all levels and the well-informed governors challenge senior leaders to continually improve.
- This is an improving school. School leaders are rigorous in their approach to checking the quality of teaching to bring about improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Years 3 and 4.
- With the exception of Year 6 there are times in mathematics when the most able pupils listen to explanations which they already understand and are set work which is too easy.
- In a small number of lessons, children in both the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are noisy and this prevents everybody from making as much progress as they could.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 44 lessons and parts of lessons taught by 29 teachers. An observation was undertaken jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at pupils' exercise books.
- Discussions were held with representatives of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, senior leaders, and managers responsible for leading specific subjects and other staff and pupils.
- Inspectors looked at the school's documentation to help gain an accurate view of its performance, safeguarding policies, the school development plan, governing body minutes, behavioural records and displays around the school.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of information on how the school checks the progress of the different pupil groups.
- Inspectors took account of the 83 responses on Parent View (the online questionnaire). Inspectors had conversations with parents in the playground.
- Inspectors analysed 29 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Des Stubbs, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Elaine White

Additional Inspector

Marilyn Massey

Additional Inspector

Michael Blaylock

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much larger than average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Year 5 and 6 classrooms are situated on a separate site 500m from the main school.
- The school trains associate teachers in its role as a 'Schools Direct' hub school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement further by ensuring that:
 - the outstanding practice in Years 5 and 6 is shared across the school
 - in mathematics the most able pupils do not spend time listening to explanations which they already understand, and that they are not given work which is too easy for them
 - children in Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 lessons are set work that engages them so they do not disrupt learning by being too noisy.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils at St. George's are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Attainment is much higher than the national average in all subjects. Inspectors saw Year 6 pupils who read fluently, wrote lively and interesting pieces engaging the reader and were able to solve complex mathematical problems. These pupils love their learning and talk with great enthusiasm about the challenges teachers provide them.
- For the past few years the progress pupils have made in Key Stage 2 has not been good enough but this is no longer the case and the progress made by all pupil groups from their different starting points is now at least good. School leaders ensure the school promotes equality of opportunity by continually checking the progress every pupil makes. Parents agree that their children make good progress.
- The majority of children enter school with skills, knowledge and understanding which are typical for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and quickly acquire a love of books and thoroughly enjoy writing, for example a letter to the giant in Jack and the Beanstalk.
- At Key Stage 1 the attainment of pupils is in line with the national average. Standards in reading are rising rapidly as a result of a more consistent approach to the teaching of phonics (linking letters and sounds). A much higher proportion of pupils are now on track to achieve well in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Evidence provided by the school shows that pupils in Key Stage 1 are now making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding make progress similar to other pupils. Their attainment is about a term behind other pupils in English and about two terms behind in mathematics. The difference in attainment between pupils eligible for a free school meal and other pupils is less than is found nationally.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good as a result of well-targeted support. These pupils make good progress from their starting points and they reach standards that are above similar pupils nationally.
- Achievement observed in all lessons by inspectors was good and outstanding in Years 5 and 6. In English teachers have very high expectations of all pupils. In mathematics, however, the most able pupils at times have to listen to explanations that they already understand and are set work which is too easy for them. This is not the case in Year 6 where the most able pupils are challenged throughout the whole lesson to work at the highest level they are capable of.

The quality of teaching is good

- During the inspection, teaching throughout the school was good and outstanding at Years 5 and 6. This concurs with the school's own checking of teaching and most parents also agree that their child is well taught.
- Teachers have received training and are working extremely hard to ensure that their questioning is appropriate and timely. As a result, inspectors found this to be a particular strength of teaching throughout the school. Teachers' questioning, in order to gauge what pupils understand and what next steps in learning they need during a lesson, is excellent.
- Teachers also skilfully use opportunities for pupils to work together to develop their ideas prior to writing, for example when sharing ideas that had been found from different historical sources about being a child in Victorian times. Pupils also develop their learning by asking other groups what they have discovered and then sharing it with their own group. This has led to a higher standard of work, in particular in writing.
- Exercise books show that teaching over time is consistently good and much is outstanding. All teachers' marking is consistently of a very high standard. Teachers provide pupils with precise instructions on how they can improve their work. Pupils have time to read their feedback and

they are very clear when explaining what they need to do to improve their work.

- Pupils take great care and pride in the way they present and organise their work and they are rightly proud when sharing their exercise books and topic books with visitors.
- Homework is set regularly and most parents agree that what their child receives is appropriate. Inspectors found the quality of homework to be outstanding. One pupil had written an enchanting story from the perspective of being a flower. This work was marked to a very high standard. Such practice is consistent throughout the school.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support learning, and children are encouraged to develop their concentration and listening skills.
- In a small number of lessons, children in both the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are noisy and this prevents everybody from making the progress they should. At these times, children are not fully involved in their learning because they are not always set work which they find interesting.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. School is a very calm and orderly place. Pupils are polite; they open doors for adults, care for their environment and enjoy the time that they spend in their garden and outside classroom.
- The school behaviour records show that behaviour around school, on the playground and in the dining hall is good and any incidents recorded are only ones of very low-level disruption. Behaviour at breakfast club and after-school club is also good. The majority of parents also agree that the school makes sure its pupils are well behaved.
- Pupils display a positive attitude towards their learning. They listen carefully, try their best and work well both on their own and with a partner. In the Year 5 and Year 6 building there is an atmosphere of serious study.
- Pupils cooperate well with each other during the times they get to discuss their work with their peers. This has a very good effect on their social and language development.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe and that staff are approachable. Nearly all parents agree that their children are happy and safe at school. Incidents of bullying are rare.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying, understand how to stay safe in different situations and they are knowledgeable about internet safety.
- Attendance is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent, however, is above the national average and the learning mentor is now taking steps to address this.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders at all levels have a clear vision for the school and all staff display a relentless determination to improve the learning experiences of pupils.
- In a short time, the headteacher has brought about significant improvements to the fabric of the building so that pupils and staff are now working in bright and modern classrooms. A gymnasium is also being built on the Year 5/6 site.
- New approaches to teaching introduced by the headteacher are now enabling pupils to make more rapid progress. In such a large school to achieve the consistency in practice seen by inspectors is a great credit to the leadership team.
- Middle leaders are very effective. They are all involved in the rigorous checking of teaching. They readily share their practice with colleagues. They have a sound knowledge of their subject areas and how teaching and learning can be improved further.
- Performance management is robust and closely linked to pupils' progress, the school's main priorities and the career stage of the teachers. Monitoring and support are intensive and have had a

clear impact on the quality of teaching. Teachers have a personalised training programme and the extensive support and guidance provided by senior leaders are appreciated by teachers, especially those new to the profession.

- The curriculum is good with some outstanding elements. Much of the art work is of the highest quality, and the many opportunities for pupils to complete extended pieces of writing linked to the different themes is leading to more rapid progress in writing. Topic books which store the completed work are very impressive and pupils are rightly proud of these. The school is well prepared for the new National Curriculum in 2014.
- Good opportunities are provided within the curriculum for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. The thematic topics also make a significant contribution. For example, linked to work on the Second World War, pupils wrote a letter to be sent to a parent in the event of a soldier's death.
- The primary school sport funding has been used effectively to improve the skills of teachers and pupils. There are increased opportunities to take part in sport clubs and to compete against other schools, which has led to greater participation. Equipment is also to be bought for the new gymnasium.
- St. George's trains associate teachers in its role as a 'Schools Direct' hub school. It works widely with other schools in the local area. One teacher successfully provides outreach support to local schools in developing creativity through literacy.
- The local authority provides the school with light-touch support.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding and child protection meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are very experienced, knowledgeable and receive appropriate training. They are well informed about the recent changes implemented to improve the quality of teaching; they have also received demonstrations from teachers about the new teaching ideas. The way in which governors challenge the headteacher is evident in the minutes of meetings which are on the school website. They understand that pay and promotion are linked to teachers' performance. They ensure efficient management of financial resources and have used the pupil premium funding effectively to make a significant impact on the attainment of eligible pupils.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	104995
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	440712

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	833
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nick Holt
Headteacher	Gareth Elswood
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2011
Telephone number	0151 638 6014
Fax number	0151 638 8025
Email address	schooloffice@stgeorges.wirral.sch.uk

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Hoylake Holy Trinity CofE Primary School

Market Street, Hoylake, Wirral, Merseyside, CH47 3BH

Inspection dates 23–24 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' achievement varies too much across the school. Not enough pupils make more than the expected amount of progress from their starting points, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good. In some lessons, learning time is wasted and this slows the pace of pupils' progress.
- Where the organisation of the lesson is not efficient and the pace of learning is slow, pupils' attention wavers and they lose motivation to do the work.
- While some examples of effective marking were seen, on many occasions teachers' marking does not help pupils to know what they need to do to improve their work.
- Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage requires improvement. Children do not always have access to activities, both inside and outside, that are appropriate for their age.
- Over time, the school leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and learning have not been sufficiently rigorous. As a result, their view on the quality of teaching overall has been too generous.
- The good practice that is evident in parts of the school has not been effectively used to improve the overall quality of teaching, learning and achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has begun to put strategies and support in place to improve the quality of teaching.
- Pupils are happy in school and feel safe. They are polite and behave sensibly around school and on the playground.
- Interesting topics, themes and extra-curricular clubs make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress and pupils' understanding of phonics (sounds that letters make) is improving strongly.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons or parts of lessons, of which one was a joint observation with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading in Key Stage 1 and held meetings with pupils drawn from across Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other leaders, including subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. Inspectors met with a group of governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors undertook a scrutiny of pupils' current work.
- A range of other evidence was also considered by inspectors. This included the school's evaluation of its own performance, development planning, performance management objectives for teachers, data about the achievement of pupils across the school, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of 54 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and a small number of parents shared their views of the school with inspectors during the inspection.
- Inspectors analysed 10 returns by staff to the inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Neil Dixon, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Maureen Coleman

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Hoylake Holy Trinity is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Nearly all of the pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is broadly average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- There is pre-school, breakfast club and after-school provision on site. These are run by external providers and are inspected separately.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.
- The school currently holds the Eco-Schools Green Flag award.
- There have been a number of changes in the school's leadership since the last inspection, and the headteacher took up post in January 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that it is always at least good, in order to accelerate pupils' progress, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, by:
 - ensuring that marking always identifies what pupils should do to improve their work further
 - ensuring the structure and organisation of the lesson promotes good learning by eliminating wasted time which is slowing pupils' progress
 - ensuring that in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are provided with more opportunities to develop skills appropriate to their age, both indoors and outside
 - ensuring that pupils' behaviour in lessons never restricts the pace of their learning.
- Strengthen the impact that new school leaders have on school improvement by:
 - embedding rigorous checks on teaching and learning so as to improve the overall quality of teaching
 - using the skills of the strongest teachers to support those who are weaker.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because the progress that pupils make is not always good enough across the school to ensure that they all reach the levels of attainment of which they are capable. While many pupils make the expected amount of progress, too few do better than this, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.
- Children start in the Reception class with skills and abilities that are typically in line with those expected for their age, although there are some small variations within each cohort. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils are working at a level that is still broadly in line with the national average. Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage requires improvement because not enough children are making accelerated progress.
- Pupils' scores in the Year 1 phonics check were below average in 2012 but improved to be broadly average in 2013. This is because strategies that the school has put in place to support progress in phonics, including 'Phonics Bootcamp' sessions, are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' confidence in using phonics to help their reading.
- Progress in Key Stage 1 is not quick enough, and so by the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment overall is broadly in line with expected levels; too few pupils have progressed to the higher levels.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment in reading is typically slightly above average and pupils say that they enjoy reading. Attainment in writing and mathematics is broadly average. This reflects a slight overall acceleration in pupils' progress in Key Stage 2.
- Progress in Key Stage 2 is, however, uneven. Not all groups of pupils have always made better progress and some groups of pupils have attained less well than others. For example, in 2013, girls' progress in mathematics was slower than for girls nationally whereas boys' progress in the same subject was slightly better than boys' progress nationally. School leaders are now addressing these differences and girls' and boys' current rates of progress are more even.
- Overall, the progress made by the most able pupils is similar to that of other pupils. It is generally stronger in Key Stage 2 than in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, where it is not quick enough. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level in reading at the end of Year 6 is typically just above the national average. However, the most able pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics is more usually in line with the national average.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those who are identified as having special educational needs is typically good. This is as a result of effective support, often provided by a committed group of teaching assistants.
- The funding for pupils eligible for the pupil premium is now used more effectively to provide small-group and individual support. This is beginning to ensure that, in almost all year groups, previous gaps between the attainment and progress of the relatively small numbers of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those of other pupils in the school are being eliminated. These pupils are now progressing as well as most other pupils, reflecting the school's increasingly effective provision for equality of opportunity.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching overall is too variable, meaning that all pupils are not always achieving as well as they could.
- While there are examples of good and occasionally outstanding teaching in different parts of the school, particularly in Key Stage 2, too much teaching over time requires improvement. Where this is the case, pupils' progress is slowed.
- Lessons start promptly and teachers plan work that provides more challenge for the most able pupils and more support for the less able pupils. However, learning time in lessons is often lost by work being given out individually or groups of pupils having to wait to have their work

explained to them. When this happens, the pace of learning is not quick enough, and pupils tend to lose concentration and the motivation to work.

- Teachers mark pupils' books regularly but the feedback that they give does not always help pupils to understand what they have to do to improve their work. As a result, while pupils know that they need to make their work better, they are not always clear about the next steps they need to take.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage does not always give children opportunities to practise their skills and develop the knowledge that is appropriate to their age and abilities. Tasks are sometimes too difficult for children and they become anxious because they are not sure what to do. Opportunities for learning outside are limited by the cramped nature of the outdoor learning area.
- The school's focused approach to teaching reading, in particular targeting phonics activities more closely to the needs of identified groups of pupils, is beginning to have a positive impact. Older pupils say that they enjoy reading and younger pupils demonstrated an improving understanding of phonics when reading to the inspectors.
- Teaching assistants generally support pupils' learning well, and relationships between pupils and all adults in the classroom are positive. These aspects make a strong contribution to the overall good progress made by disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Information and communication technology is used regularly across the school, but its impact on the quality of teaching and learning is mixed. In an effective Year 5 lesson, pupils filmed each other, explaining how they had tackled problems linked to angles, which encouraged pupils to think about and explain their mathematical reasoning. At other times, problems with the technology not working or too many pupils having to share computers or tablet devices caused disruption to learning.
- In lessons where pupils make the best progress, teachers use questioning skilfully to involve all pupils in the learning and make sure that learning moves on at a lively pace, so that pupils stay interested and keen to learn. For example, in an outstanding Year 6 mathematics lesson, the teacher set pupils a series of different open-ended challenges involving number patterns that were hard enough to make the most able pupils really think but gave the less able pupils the chance to develop and practise skills at an appropriate level. As a result, all pupils were determined to solve their own problems and find the missing numbers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' behaviour requires improvement. This is because pupils do not always have enough self-motivation to work and do not always show sufficient interest in their work. This is particularly the case in lessons where learning time is wasted and the pace of learning is too slow. In these instances, pupils are slow tackling their work, and work is sometimes not completed.
- Pupils do not always take enough pride in their work and, as a result, the quality of presentation of their work in books is variable. Some teachers have higher expectations of the standard of presentation that they are looking for and generally, pupils respond well to these expectations.
- Around the school and on the playground, pupils behave well. They know the school rules and follow them sensibly. Pupils are friendly towards one another and polite and courteous towards adults in school. As a result, pupils say that they are happy in the school: one pupil said that she enjoyed coming to school to 'learn and have fun with my friends'.
- Attendance over time is broadly average. The school is taking appropriate steps to try to improve attendance, particularly of the small number of pupils whose absence is significantly higher than the national average.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe in school, and parents support this view.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. They are aware of different types of bullying, including name-calling and cyber-bullying, but say that instances of bullying in school are extremely rare. Pupils are confident that adults in the school would deal

with any problems or concerns that they might have.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because not enough teaching in the school is good or better and, as a result, pupils do not always achieve as well as they could. Until recently, actions taken since the previous inspection were not effective enough in addressing the identified areas for improvement.
- The headteacher, who has been in post since January 2014, and subject leaders, some of whom are also new to senior leadership roles, have now identified areas for improvement and plans for tackling them, but it is too soon to judge the full impact of this work. Early signs are that improvements in the organisation of phonics teaching are having a positive impact on the progress that pupils make in developing their knowledge of the sounds that letters make, while the pupil premium funding is being more effectively used to impact on pupils' achievement.
- The headteacher, and other senior leaders, have quickly and accurately identified weaknesses in teaching and have put appropriate support plans in place. These, and successful actions already taken, indicate leaders' capacity to improve the school further.
- Performance management arrangements have not previously been sufficiently robust to ensure that teaching is consistently good. However, the new headteacher has made sure that targets to improve teaching are now much clearer, more challenging and more focused on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and rate of progress.
- The curriculum is enhanced with a range of interesting activities linked to topics that are designed to interest pupils, which have included food-tasting sessions in school and a residential visit for older pupils.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils speak particularly enthusiastically about the school's links with a partner school in Sri Lanka, for which they have organised a range of fundraising activities.
- The school has used the additional primary school sport funding to provide specialist coaches to work alongside teachers, enhancing the variety of sports and games covered in lessons and increasing teachers' skills and knowledge. Pupils also enjoy taking part in sporting activities after school, including judo and an energetic and well-attended multi-sports club.
- The local authority is providing effective support for the school. In conjunction with the school's governing body, the local authority ensured that appropriate support was put in place for new school leaders, and an experienced headteacher from a successful local school is now working regularly with the school in an advisory role.
- The school engages well with parents, through regular newsletters and parents' evenings. While a small minority felt that they could be better informed about their children's progress in school, a very large majority would recommend the school to other parents.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are supportive of the school. With better governor training and well-thought-out changes to governance roles and structures, governors have improved their focus on the school's performance through closer analysis of data and are now providing appropriate challenge to school leaders.
 - Governors now have a clear and accurate view of the quality of teaching in the school and the strategies that leaders have put in place to monitor, support and challenge weaker teaching. They ensure that appropriate opportunities for pay progression and promotion are available to teachers who meet their performance targets.
 - Governors manage finances well and have used them effectively, for example, in redeveloping the school's main outdoor play area. They are also aware of how the pupil premium funding has been used and the increasing impact that it is having on eligible pupils.
 - Governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and that pupils are kept safe in school.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105063
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	431003

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Bates
Headteacher	Catherine O'Neill Edwards
Date of previous school inspection	21 March 2012
Telephone number	0151 6324153
Fax number	0151 6320886
Email address	schooloffice@hoylakeholytrinity.wirral.sch.uk

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Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Gautby Road, Bidston, Birkenhead, Merseyside, CH41 7DU

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school has been recognised and awarded for ensuring that all pupils have equal access to learning, and staff, governors and a group of dedicated parents pull together to ensure that all pupils make at least good progress and are well cared for.
- The proportion of pupils making better than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics is significantly above average. Attainment is rising sharply at the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2.
- The quality of teaching is much improved since the last inspection and in the overwhelming majority of lessons is good.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.
- The school is effectively raising levels of attendance, which are rapidly improving.
- Pupils' behaviour is good, as is their understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They are exceptionally eager to learn.
- The headteacher is very committed, and has led improvements in teaching effectively. Highly respected, staff and parents describe her as 'very approachable', and 'always visible'.
- Governors are fully focused on improving pupils' achievement, and are fully involved in the life of the school. They are well aware of the challenging circumstances for some pupils and are determined that the school should make a difference to the lives of all pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' attainment, despite improving at a good pace, remains below average.
- Learning activities are not always challenging enough particularly for the most able. Teachers' questions are not always sharp enough to make pupils think.
- Marking does not always make it clear to pupils how to improve their work.
- Resources and activities in mathematics are not always interesting enough to capture pupils' interest and accelerate their progress.
- Not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to practise their reading and mathematical skills in other subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons, including parts of lessons, as well as the teaching of small groups of pupils and sessions aimed at helping pupils to learn to read through understanding the links between letters and the sounds they make (phonics teaching).
- Inspectors listened to pupils read from Years 2, 3, 4, and 5, and held discussions with pupils from across the school. Pupils' work in books was scrutinised during lessons.
- There were too few responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to consider. Inspectors held informal discussions with parents at the beginning of the school day, held a meeting with parents and took account of 17 questionnaires completed by members of staff.
- A meeting took place with the school's education consultant and a telephone discussion took place with a representative from the local authority school improvement service. A meeting was held with four governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Various school documents were examined. These included the school's development plan and review of its own performance, data on pupils' progress, external school evaluations, records of the school's checks on the quality of teaching, minutes of the governing body meetings, records of pupils' attendance, behaviour records and safeguarding documentation.

Inspection team

Lenford White, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Terry Bond

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is triple the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school receives additional funding through the pupil premium for almost all pupils. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school has a very small proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups, and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Since the last inspection, the school has been reorganised and now has a middle management tier as part of its structure. A number of new governors have been appointed, including the Chair of the Governing Body. A number of new staff have been appointed, including a newly qualified teacher.
- The school runs a breakfast club and a range of after-school activities.
- In July 2013 the school achieved the Inclusion Quality Mark.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the level of pupils' attainment so that it is at least in line with the national average by:
 - ensuring that lessons include work that is always hard enough, particularly for the most able, and that adults' questions are probing, making pupils think hard and work things out for themselves
 - checking that marking tells pupils how to improve their work, and that time is given for pupils to think about teachers' comments and make corrections
 - providing as many opportunities as possible for pupils to apply their reading and mathematical skills across the curriculum
 - ensuring resources and activities in mathematics capture pupils' interest and help them to make faster progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement is good from their very low starting points. They are making good progress in their current learning. Standards are rising rapidly and are higher than at the time of the last inspection.
- Children enter the Nursery class with exceptionally low skills in most areas of learning. Their language and communication skills are especially weak. However, well trained caring adults ensure that they make good progress. Despite this, only about a third of pupils enter Year 1 having attained the level of development expected for their age.
- Progress is good in both Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are now making much faster progress than they have done in the past. This is also true of pupils in Key Stage 2 but many in this key stage have to make up lost ground because they did not learn well enough in earlier years.
- In 2013, pupils' attainment in national tests was below average at both Key Stages 1 and 2 but rising sharply. The attainment of pupils in currently Year 6 in reading and writing, while still below average, is continuing to improve.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Year 1 is improving and this is helping pupils make better progress in their reading and writing. However, in 2013, Year 1 pupils still struggled to reach the required standard in the national phonics screening check.
- The school has done much to foster in pupils a love of books, and to encourage them to read regularly. Year 3 pupils who read to inspectors were very proud to demonstrate that they knew the difference between fiction and non-fiction books and could define words such as 'glossary', and 'index'. As a result of the school's efforts, pupils are making good progress in reading. However, they still have too few opportunities to practise their reading skills when working in other subjects.
- The school's data show that currently pupils make good progress in mathematics in all year groups, and that Year 6 pupils, for example, are on track to reach their challenging targets by the end of the year. As a result, attainment in mathematics is now much closer to the nationally expected level. However, as with reading, pupils are not given enough chances to develop their skills of mathematics when working in other subjects.
- The school's many small-group and one-to-one teaching activities are targeted and specifically tailored to develop pupils' skills and improve their attainment. These activities helped to ensure that in 2013 at the end of Year 6, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieved similar standards to others in this group nationally, and made good progress.
- No valid in-school comparisons can be made between the performance of pupils entitled to support through the pupil premium, and those who are not. This is because in 2013 all pupils in Year 2 were entitled to this support, as were all but three of the 22 pupils in Year 6. In 2013, the progress made by pupils known to be eligible to free school meals was much higher than that made by similar pupils nationally. Currently, these pupils are less than one term behind similar groups of pupils nationally in English and mathematics.
- Data show that over the last two years there have been some variations between the performance of boys and girls. Currently, girls are ahead of boys in some year groups. However, teachers check carefully when planning lessons that they are of equal interest to boys and girls, and as a result, the performance of boys is improving.
- Although in some lessons the work set for the most able pupils is not hard enough overall, by the time they leave Year 6 they make good progress. They benefit from small-group teaching activities, including specially developed creative writing workshops, which accelerate their progress. Those pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they enjoyed writing and demonstrated a good use of descriptive language during lesson observations.
- The school has few pupils from minority ethnic groups, and very few who speak English as an

additional language. However, subject leaders regularly monitor the progress of pupils from all these groups, however small. The school's current data show that minority ethnic pupils are making at least good progress overall.

The quality of teaching is good

- Almost all teaching observed during the inspection was good. A full check on pupils' work over the last year showed that teaching overtime is good.
- Good teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that children get off to a good start in a stimulating and well managed environment in which children work well together.
- The overwhelming majority of teachers make it their business to ensure that pupils enjoy learning and this ensures they work hard. This was the case in a very exciting Year 6 English lesson where the teacher asked pupils to think about and describe a fantasy landscape. Pupils took up the task with gusto and were challenged throughout the lesson to make their sentences as complex as possible. At the end of the lesson, pupils shared sentences such as 'the dark cave let small particles of light in from the colourful mountains and snowy sea'.
- Innovative methods often provide pupils with learning that is just what is needed to capture their attention. For example, in a good mathematics lesson taught with three groups of pupils of different abilities, the lower ability pupils were engaged in a very stimulating activity as they danced outside in their hats and coats while using pairs of ribbons to copy the shapes of numbers demonstrated by their teaching assistant. They thoroughly enjoyed their learning and made good progress in forming numbers.
- However, not all lessons are this challenging and do not always sustain pupils' enthusiasm for learning. In some, tasks are not sufficiently well matched to pupils' abilities, especially those for the most able, and pupils are not consistently required to either think hard about what they are learning or find things out for themselves. Questions encourage discussion but are not always sharp enough to make pupils think.
- Many pupils who spoke to inspectors indicated that mathematics was their favourite subject. However, too few examples were found in pupils' books of mathematical activities where resources and activities were stimulating enough to clearly engage pupils' interest and help them to make faster progress. Limited evidence was seen of pupils practising their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.
- Teachers are careful to ensure that all pupils' work is marked and up-to-date. However, a few teachers do not make it clear how to improve work and then ensure pupils act upon advice.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are very proud of their school, and say that the best thing about it is 'the learning, teachers and friends'. Pupils' behave well in and around the school, during play and in lessons. Pupils' behaviour is not outstanding because some pupils can be 'off-task' when they are not fully engaged in learning.
- They are very sensible and well behaved during lunchtimes, and older pupils like to take on board responsibilities, such as acting as play buddies for their younger school-mates.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils who spoke to inspectors were of the opinion that behaviour is good most of the time, and that bullying is rare. School records concur with this, as do the views of staff and parents.
- All pupils indicate that they are very confident to go to adults if they have any concerns. As one pupil put it, 'if there are problems, teachers always sort them out, if it's something really bad it goes to the headteacher and is put in the blue book'.
- Older pupils have a strong sense of social justice and are aware of most forms of prejudice and

discrimination. One pupil noted that, 'it's wrong to say nasty words to someone of a different colour.... it would break their heart inside'.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Younger pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they almost always feel safe, and that they know they can always talk to adults during breaks and at lunchtime.
- Older pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe while using the internet. They are fully aware that cyber-bullying can take place on social networking sites, through mobile phone messaging services, and on hand-held games. When Key Stage 2 pupils were asked what advice they would give to Key Stage 1 pupils on how to stay safe while using the internet, all agreed that they should 'never reveal passwords to anyone, and never talk to anyone unless you know them'.
- All pupils are taught through personal, social and health education and assemblies how to cross roads safely, to take care on Bonfire Night and never to talk to strangers.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, supported by very able senior and middle management teams, active governors and committed teachers and staff, is determined to continually improve the school. Leadership and management are extremely strong, but not outstanding because pupils attainment is not yet good enough.
- Senior leaders have worked extremely hard to address the areas for improvement identified from the last inspection. The capacity of the governing body to hold school leaders fully to account has significantly improved and a well trained, effective middle leadership team is now in place.
- The school's work to develop the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of pupils' learning is strong, as evident in the way in which pupils care about and relate to each other.
- The school's middle leadership team know that their work has to make a difference. They are knowledgeable about their area of responsibility. Their well organised work is already helping to improve standards.
- The school is becoming more prominent both locally and regionally through sharing good practice. For example, the creative writing workshops that it has hosted for its cluster of schools on creative writing for gifted and talented pupils, were hailed as a success by all partners.
- The curriculum is good, and involves pupils well in a wide-range of enrichment activities, including weekly music workshops led by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, judo and trampoline. The school's priority of raising levels of attainment in mathematics through, for example, the daily '20 minute challenge', is beginning to impact on standards.
- Senior leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching and ensure that teachers are appropriately trained in order to effectively execute their responsibilities. For example, the school's recently appointed newly qualified teacher is very appreciative of the mentoring and training that she receives, as is the school's special educational needs manager, who is currently in the process of acquiring her specialist qualification.
- The local authority, having worked with the school in a number of areas, including monitoring the quality of teaching, has reduced its support and is confident in the school's capacity for sustained improvement.
- The primary school sports fund has helped to improve teachers' skills in teaching a wide range of sporting activities, and developed pupils' confidence in trying new sports, including street-dance, dodge-ball and basketball.
- Safeguarding procedures are followed closely and meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very active, and work exceptionally well together. They are fully involved in the school's activities, have a good understanding of performance data, and know exactly how well the school is doing. Led by a very experienced Chair of the Governing Body, governors

know that their main priority is to ensure that pupils' attainment continually improves. The work of the school's parent-link governor is exemplary. Her commitment to running the school's mid-morning toast club, listening to pupils read and mustering the support of parents is first-rate.

- Governors know that the quality of teaching is improving because they all have class and curriculum responsibilities, which put them in regular contact with teachers. They never award pay increases or endorse promotions unless teachers achieve their targets. Governors ensure that no pupil is disadvantaged because of their personal or family circumstances. They know that pupil premium funding is making a difference through, for example, the speech and language support it funds, which is helping entitled pupils to develop their skills in reading, writing and mathematics.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105087
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	431005

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	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Allan Rogan
Headteacher	Jane Bradley
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2012
Telephone number	0151 652 8454
Fax number	0151 652 7715
Email address	schooloffice@holycross.wirral.sch.uk

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The Mosslands School

Mosslands Drive, Wallasey, Merseyside, CH45 8PJ

Inspection dates 26–27 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement is too variable between subjects and classes. As a result, the standards students reach by the end of Year 11 are average and are not high enough given students' average starting points on entry to the school.
- Over the past three years insufficient numbers of students have made good progress in history and geography and more recently, the most able do not make good enough progress in mathematics.
- Achievement in the sixth form requires improvement. Progress has not been good, because the courses on offer have been too academic and not always matched the levels of ability of the students.
- Too much teaching requires improvement. It does not always capture students' interest and motivate them well enough to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Teachers do not always provide students with clear written comments and guidance on how to improve their work.
- Behaviour requires improvement because attitudes to learning are not always consistently positive. This hinders the progress students make.
- Not all middle leaders are using the full range of evidence available to them well enough, to assess the progress of students in the areas for which they are responsible.

The school has the following strengths

- Some teaching is good and some is outstanding, resulting in students making good or better progress in these lessons.
- Students, including those with disabilities, say that they are safe in school. Parents and staff agree strongly with these views.
- There is a good range of well-attended additional activities and clubs that students enjoy.
- The headteacher has a clear view about what needs to be done to improve teaching and achievement.
- Actions taken by the headteacher and other leaders have resulted in many more students reaching higher GCSE grades in English. This demonstrates the leadership's capacity to secure improvement in school.
- Governors are now making a good contribution to improvements in school. They are challenging the headteacher and senior leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning to accelerate students' achievement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 lessons given by 40 teachers. Three observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. In addition, the inspectors visited an assembly and made some short visits to tutor groups.
- Inspectors spoke to four groups of students about their learning in lessons and their safety in school. Inspectors also listened to some students reading.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of Governors and two other governors, school staff and two representatives of the local authority. Inspectors also looked at the school’s review of its performance, its development plan, school policies and the minutes of governing body meetings. Inspectors also considered a range of documentation in relation to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors looked at students’ work in lessons and analysed a sample of students’ books from a wide range of subjects.
- Inspectors analysed the 29 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 46 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

James McGrath, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Elizabeth Haddock	Additional Inspector
Osama Abdul Rahim	Additional Inspector
Jacqueline Rothery	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school for boys is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those from service families and those looked after by the local authority.
- Almost all students are White British. With very few exceptions, students speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is above average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The alternative providers used by the school are Fairbridge Princes Trust, The Shaftesbury Youth Hub, Basetech Training and Adcote House. The school works in partnership with The Wallasey Schools' Consortium to broaden course choice in the sixth form.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school holds the Investors in People award and is a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Centre of Excellence.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least consistently good by ensuring that teachers:
 - plan interesting and creative lessons that motivate students to learn well and to improve their behaviour
 - give students more opportunities to work together so they can make a greater contribution to their own learning and progress
 - plan and set work that matches the needs and abilities of all students more closely
 - mark students' work regularly and use the information gained about how well they are doing more effectively
 - provide specific advice in marking on how students can improve their work
 - manage more effectively the learning of students with special educational needs.
- Improve students' attainment and progress by:
 - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve
 - challenging the most-able students more effectively so that they make better progress, particularly in mathematics
 - ensuring that all teachers require their students to act upon the advice given in marking.
- Improve the impact of middle leaders on students' achievement by ensuring:
 - they use the full range of evidence available to them to determine the quality of teaching, learning and students' progress in their subjects
 - they make regular checks on the quality of marking and feedback given to students and how this promotes better progress
 - they provide accurate assessments of students' progress to enable the school to intervene more effectively when needed.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- From average levels of prior attainment on entry to the school, the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics is broadly as seen nationally. Following a 'dip' in performance in 2012, particularly in English, attainment rose again to average in 2013. Over time, therefore, students' achievement requires improvement.
- Results in mathematics have been just above average for the past three years. In addition, as a result of good teaching, achievement in modern languages continues to be good.
- Following a concerted effort from the headteacher and senior team, progress and attainment in history and geography are now rising. This systematic approach to raising standards is also having a positive impact in other areas of the curriculum.
- Students generally make the progress expected of them in English and in mathematics across the school but not enough make better than expected progress. Inspection evidence shows that the school is promoting literacy, including spelling, grammar and reading effectively across the school. The promotion and reinforcement of students' numeracy skills are not as widespread but students have additional taught periods of mathematics.
- The most-able pupils reach national standards in most subjects but do not make enough additional progress to reach the highest GCSE grades. In particular, they do not make better than expected progress in mathematics.
- Students following vocational courses achieve well, particularly in information and communication technology.
- The achievement of those students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium has improved rapidly since the previous inspection. The standards they now reach are now much closer to the standards reached by others in the school. For example, the proportion attaining five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, is now higher than ever before: they are now attaining one third of a GCSE grade lower than others in the school. This rapid improvement is due to the good support they receive in small teaching groups and also the work of individual mentors. This work is an example of the school's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- The progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs is variable and for students supported at school action and school action plus is lower than others. Well-founded actions, such as expert classroom support from a highly skilled teacher to support these students are now having a positive impact and their achievement is beginning to rise.
- Year 7 'catch up' funding has been used to provide more one-to-one specialist teaching in English and mathematics. It has also been used to purchase a new 'Accelerated Reader,' to improve students' reading skills. As yet, the impact of these actions has not been fully assessed.
- Overall, achievement in the sixth form requires improvement. Courses have not always matched students' abilities and this has led to variation in attainment across subjects and progress that is not always as strong as it should be. The school now offers a wider range of vocational courses to meet the needs of more students, but it is too early to gauge the impact of this offer.
- Almost all students continue in education, employment or training.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent across the main school and also on occasions in the sixth form. This inconsistency in classroom practice inhibits students from making good or better progress over time in their studies. Teaching therefore requires improvement.
- Teachers do not always plan exciting and interesting work for students. In such lessons, students lose concentration and the pace of learning is too slow to ensure they make good progress.
- In some lessons, students spend too long listening to the teacher and they are all set the same

task. Some find the task too easy and have to wait for others who find the task too hard. Several students believe they are not challenged enough in Years 7 to 9 in order to prepare them well enough for the work in Years 10 and 11.

- Not all teachers create opportunities for the students to learn from each other and to work things out for themselves. This prevents students developing strong enough skills to support their own learning. They therefore become too dependent on the teacher to tell them what they have to do next.
- The marking of students' work is inconsistent across and within subjects. Some marking is irregular, cursory and does not provide helpful guidance to help students to improve their work.
- An analysis of students' work indicates that some marking is good and assists good progress, particularly in English and, on occasions, in history and geography. These departments have certainly benefited from the support of the headteacher and other senior leaders in school.
- When teaching is good or better, students' prior knowledge is used well, lessons move on at a good pace and students are interested in what they are doing. Teachers question students skilfully and organise their classrooms to ensure that students contribute well to their learning by sharing ideas and learning from each other. Teachers here have high expectations of what their students can do and the students strive to achieve well.
- When lessons are well planned and students have opportunities to be creative they respond exceptionally well. In a computer studies lesson, for example, the teacher established students' prior skills in programming and gave them an interesting task to write a game using computer code. Students worked hard to meet the teacher's high expectations. They enjoyed the lesson and made outstanding progress.
- In addition, in lessons where teaching is good or better, teaching assistants are used well to support many students and not just the least able or those with disabilities. They are well-respected by the students and ask thoughtful questions which require students to find things out for themselves.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' attitudes to learning are not consistently positive. Teachers do not always provide students with interesting tasks and this leads to students talking about things other than their work. In these lessons, students are not encouraged to think for themselves so they lose concentration.
- Students are clear about the school's rules and respond quickly when teachers instruct them to pay attention and to address their work in class. When lessons are well planned and teaching is good, students respond well and exhibit good attitudes to learning.
- Behaviour is improving and the number of exclusions from school has reduced. Students are responding very positively to the new behaviour policy. They say they appreciate the rewards they can earn for good work and good behaviour.
- The school's concerted efforts to reduce persistent absenteeism have been very effective. During the past year there were almost no pupils who were persistently absent from school. However, the school has not always analysed its absence information rigorously enough to improve overall attendance which is below average. Punctuality to school has improved.
- Around the school, students are polite and courteous to each other and to adults. They are confident in discussing their views of school with adults. They treat each other with great respect and move sensibly and safely around the school. This ensures that the school is a harmonious community.
- Students say that there is some bullying, although it is rare and is dealt with effectively by the school when it occurs. The school's records show that during the past year there has been a reduction in the number of incidents considered as bullying. Students are well aware of the many different forms bullying can take.
- The school teaches students to assess personal risk and how to keep themselves safe. They have a good understanding of internet safety.

- Students say they are safe in school and those with disabilities speak very highly about their experiences in school. Parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire and all staff who responded to the staff questionnaire are confident that students are safe in school. Few students attend alternative off-site provision but the safety and progress of those who do are monitored closely by the school.
- Students in the sixth form make a good contribution to the school and to the local community through their work for charity and their collaborations with the local council in community projects. Students feel they get good information and guidance to support their entry to further and higher education and to employment.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because they have not ensured that the quality of teaching and students' progress over time are good. Also, not all middle leaders are using the information available to them well enough to monitor students' progress with accuracy.
- Following his appointment in September 2012, the headteacher has established a new leadership team and supported the formation of a new governing body. He has ensured that his clear views on how successful the school can be and his high ambitions for the school and its students are fully understood by all staff and governors.
- Staff are supported effectively in the drive to improve the school. As a result, the proportion of students achieving five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, has risen and there has been a significant rise in the percentages of higher GCSE grades in English. Senior leaders judge the quality of teaching accurately.
- The school's action plan is based on an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. Middle leaders are now guided well by senior leaders to identify how they plan to improve the quality of provision in their areas.
- A thorough system for checking students' progress is being introduced throughout the school. However, not all middle leaders are using the school's systems for checking students' progress well enough. Senior leaders have put a monitoring process in place to ensure that the assessment of students' progress is accurate.
- Some middle leaders are not yet checking students' work in books to make sure that all teachers are providing an interesting range of activities and providing feedback that helps students make good progress. Also, some are overgenerous when judging the quality of teaching.
- Staff are being held to account for their actions through the use of clear job descriptions and a rigorous performance management system. Teachers are set challenging targets to raise standards within the school. Their professional development is well supported to improve the quality of teaching, although it is too early to see the full impact of actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- The curriculum offers a good range of academic and vocational courses and there is now a greater focus on the development of reading and literacy skills. The school has already hosted a literacy festival for the students.
- Recently, sixth form course choice has been improved to match more closely the needs and abilities of the students. This has been done through collaboration with a number of local schools to form the Wallasey Schools' Consortium, which offers a range of vocational and GCSE-equivalent courses. This is beginning to improve standards in the sixth form.
- The wide range of sporting activities, the debating club, house competitions, school visits, charity work and good provision for the arts contribute well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students say they appreciate the time that teachers give to organise and deliver these additional activities.
- The local authority provides effective support for the school. Through its Improvement Adviser it has assisted the school in developing an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses and it supports the development of middle leaders.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors use their skills well to support the school. They have an accurate view of the school through reports from the headteacher, middle leaders and some visits and meetings in school. They understand student progress data and ask searching questions of the headteacher to determine what needs to be done to improve standards. The governing body knows the main priorities for the school and sets challenging targets for the headteacher and senior leadership. Governors use their skills and make checks on the school's budget and plan for the future. They have approved the use of pupil premium funding to employ additional support for students and know that gaps in attainment have closed as a result. Governors oversee the arrangements linking teachers' performance and pay and they know what is being done to improve the quality of teaching. When teachers' targets are not met they challenge the headteacher to ensure that there is improvement. The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements and the school rejects all forms of discrimination.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105103
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	426177

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	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	871
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	182
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Williams
Headteacher	Adrian Whiteley
Date of previous school inspection	11 January 2012
Telephone number	0151 6388131
Fax number	0151 6391317
Email address	admin@mosslands.wirral.sch.uk

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Back to school

Ways for scrutiny to influence local education and support school leaders to improve results



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www.local.gov.uk

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- Councillor Bennett and Paul Dean, East Sussex County Council

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- Birmingham City Council
- Blackpool Borough Council
- Buckinghamshire County Council
- East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- London Borough of Hackney
- London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
- Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

Foreword

I am delighted to introduce this publication arising from the latest collaboration between the Local Government Association (LGA) and Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS). As all involved in education grapple with new school structures and models, it is timely to focus on how councillors can best contribute, using their scrutiny responsibilities.

I firmly believe that the scrutiny role of councillors becomes more – not less – important as schools become more autonomous. To achieve the council's ambitions for its local area and community, councillors increasingly need to use the power of influence, coalition building and credible, informed persuasion to get all partners to cooperate together.

These are exactly the skills and attributes demonstrated by the best overview and scrutiny reviews, as CfPS knows from our Good Scrutiny Awards each year. I believe that this power of influence can potentially be more persuasive and effective than when the Local Education Authority sought to rely on their statutory powers to direct schools – because it brings schools into the wider debate about outcomes for children and young people. Regardless of changes in the management of local schools and any moves to Academy status or the setting up of Free Schools, councils continue to have a role to play in the local schools system and retain a range of statutory responsibilities for children in their area and for school improvement.

As you will read, the lessons from our seven case studies are clear and compelling. They have identified the need for closer links with school leaders, for better communication between councillors and local schools and for greater support and training for both councillors and school governors. They have also shown that council scrutiny can challenge all providers on their contribution to wider issues as well as school results.

Our conclusion is that scrutiny of the changing world of education needs to develop a clear focus, work out where its reviews can add value and be clear about the changing lines of accountability, whilst building relationships to gain support for its work in this area.

I hope that our case studies and the shared learning captured in this guide demonstrate to other councils that scrutiny is an important tool for helping councils to meet their continuing statutory responsibilities towards children and young people, regardless of the status of their local schools.

I would like to thank the LGA for funding and collaborating on this project and the councils involved for sharing their experience and ideas.

Jessica Crowe
Executive Director, CfPS

Introduction

“Overview and scrutiny goes back to school”

This quote, from one of the participants of the programme, captures what this publication is trying to achieve – helping councils to understand the different ways to keep in touch with schools and to identify opportunities for scrutiny to influence local education, support school leaders and help improve school results.

About this publication

All schools have become more independent of councils in recent years, but the Academies Act of 2010, the rapid increase in Academies in many areas and the emergence of Free Schools, has fundamentally changed established relationships. The council is still accountable for promoting academic excellence, protecting vulnerable children, school place planning and a whole raft of other responsibilities¹. To discharge these through what is effectively becoming in some areas an independent sector, councils need to develop a strong strategic role based on completely new ‘rules of engagement’.

Many councillors thought the Academies Act gave absolute autonomy to schools and released councils from all responsibility, not

realising they still had fundamental duties to discharge, for some of which Ofsted at the very least would be holding them to account.

The dilution of council powers and the increasing numbers of schools becoming directly accountable to the Secretary of State makes the job of fulfilling these statutory duties more challenging. The case for a continued but changing role for councils and their scrutiny function is compelling in relation to all schools, whatever their governance.

In June 2013, the LGA and SOLACE published a report that illustrates how a number of councils have responded to the challenge of the changing accountability landscape - showcasing the work being done by councils up and down the country to support school improvement. Coinciding with the new Ofsted inspection regime for school improvement support by councils, it showed how councils are adapting to the changing educational context of increasing school autonomy by strengthening and deepening their relationships with local schools.

CfPS recognised that the new pressures on councils with respect to the results achieved by pupils in their schools, regardless of management structures, required councils to increase their knowledge of pupil attainment and school improvement and the role of the council in school improvement – and that there is a role for scrutiny. Working with councils that have identified a role for scrutiny within the evolving educational

¹ http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=129dab82-7e7b-4466-9e17-8661848ffec4&groupId=10171 }

picture, this programme and publication focuses on the role of council scrutiny to influence and improve education.

At a workshop in September 2013, programme participants were asked to detail as many ways as possible that scrutiny could review education, including pupil attainment, governance, school improvement and the role of councillors. Over 30 ideas were captured.

These have been themed under the following headings and are explored in more detail within this publication:

- Developing relationships with schools
- Reviewing and monitoring performance
- Reviewing approaches to school improvement and support services
- Reviewing governance
- Reviewing and understanding resource allocation.

Whilst there is a separate section on developing relationships with schools and the importance of good strong supportive partnerships, these run as a thread through the other sections encouraging schools and scrutiny to work together to benefit children and young people.



Developing relationships with schools

Overview

This section puts the foundations in place to ensure that the role of scrutiny in improving school performance can develop to its full capacity. Effective relationships are the cornerstone of ensuring that education delivery and school support services and people engaged in schools and activity relating to children and young people work together to mutual benefit and around common goals.

Sometimes regarded as a cliché, developing effective relationships is vitally important and not hard to do if you understand respective roles, responsibilities, purpose and the added value of a good working partnership.

A lot can be learnt from the role and function of health scrutiny over recent years. Health scrutiny is based on specific powers that education scrutiny does not have – but health scrutiny has rarely relied just on these powers to get results – the powers are used only as a last resort. Instead it has developed an understanding of health services, developed effective working partnerships and ensured that the health service understands what scrutiny is. Hospitals, ambulance trusts, community health services and other health commissioners and providers have learnt that health scrutiny can assist when making changes in health provision, or when tackling underperformance or seeking to involve patients and the public. Also health scrutiny is not ‘inspection’ or ‘performance management’. Similar roles are possible in education and parallels may be drawn with schools, school improvement services, governing bodies, parents and pupils.

It requires an understanding of different roles and expectations in education and the added value that might result from external constructive challenge by the critical friend of scrutiny.

Many head teachers, chairs of governing bodies and other school leaders may not be familiar with the role of scrutiny. However, there is the statutory requirement for scrutiny committees that cover education to have co-optees from governing bodies, which may include parent governors and diocesan representatives in respect of voluntary aided faith schools. It therefore is important to champion scrutiny, to tell the story of why it is important and how it might add value, to explain that it is the voice of the public (parent and pupil, the local business community and others) and to demonstrate how it helps the council to deliver the best services to its wider community, including its schools.

Ways to improve links with schools

Raise the profile of scrutiny

Given the perceived limited knowledge about scrutiny and the changing education system and council support, it would be important to showcase what scrutiny does and how it can help a school and the council in respect of its responsibilities in connection with education. This would include drawing on examples from other councils or making comparisons with health scrutiny.

Tips!

- ✓ Create opportunities to explore and understand respective roles, perhaps by attending a schools forum.
- ✓ Consider ways of improving communication through publishing a scrutiny newsletter or setting up an email group or agreeing the information that should be shared with scrutiny by schools.
- ✓ Ask if the scrutiny chair might visit the school and meet with the head teacher and chair of governors to explain the role and explore how they might work together, highlighting the potential value.

Strengthening links between local councillors and schools in their ward or division

Local councillors have a unique role in their community and are best placed to ensure that the school is aware of the community that it is within. These individual relationships help to break down perceived barriers. Challenge is easier to exert if the council and councillors are alongside their schools and are supportive and interested in their activity.

Tips!

- ✓ Show support by attending school and community events.
- ✓ Show an interest all of the time – not just when performance is patchy!

Site visits to schools

Visiting schools gives councillors a ‘real life’ picture, helping them to get to know their schools and its leaders. This type of informal approach helps councillors “feel where the school is coming from”, and brings its activities to life. It also helps schools to gain a different view of the council and its councillors and how they might work together.

Tips!

- ✓ Contact the head teacher to request a visit or tour of the school – stating your reasons and indicating that you would like to support them.
- ✓ Plan where visits can be used most effectively and where information gleaned may be helpful evidence.
- ✓ Once you have developed good working partnerships, ask to hold a scrutiny committee at the school and engage the school leaders and pupils as co-optees, partners or witnesses in a review or inquiry.
- ✓ Consider the role of schools within their community, rather than focus only on performance and results.

Strengthening links with local school and education leaders

Councillors and governors, whether appointed to community schools from the council or elected by parents, selected from a council or staff, or co-opted in Academies² have very similar roles not dissimilar from scrutiny. Working together to share experiences and skills will allow for better governance overall. Understanding where scrutiny can help school governors and where school governors can help scrutiny will help build support for partnership working.

Tips!

- ✓ Be clear about the information you need, from whom it is available, how it will be sourced and why you need it.
- ✓ Be clear about the different types of governing body and governors how they are elected, selected or appointed, and their roles.
- ✓ Create opportunities for direct conversations with parents, pupils, head teachers, chairs of governors and leaders of federations or Academy chains – and for scrutiny to meet with schools on a regular basis.
- ✓ Involve the Youth Parliament, youth representatives on scrutiny and other students in field research with their peers e.g. young carers and schools.
- ✓ Try holding in-depth reviews to look at topics related to schools and invite school leaders to suggest possible topics that might help them.
- ✓ Consider joint training and sharing of scrutiny skills between councillors and governors. Sharing council best practice on governance and transparency might be helped by comparing schools' approaches and openness to scrutiny and information sharing.
- ✓ Explore opportunities to maximise the role of council governors in particular and share scrutiny skills between governors, councillors and others along the lines of the CfPS local accountability framework – Accountability Works for You³.

² <http://www.education.gov.uk/a00226253/academy>

³ <http://www.cfps.org.uk/accountability-works-for-you>

Reviewing and monitoring performance

Overview

Although not new, the Academies agenda has strengthened and gained momentum recently, with more and more schools opting to become independent of the council. This has caused anxiety in some areas with councils fearing that they are losing oversight of performance, admissions and curricular within Academies across their area – and that they are becoming more distant from schools.

Monitoring, challenge and support remain clear roles for a council as it seeks to raise pupil achievement across the whole area – getting the best possible schools for local children. The work by scrutiny that is outlined in this publication shows how council scrutiny committees can help councils to fill this emerging accountability gap and to continue to fulfil their ‘champions for children’ role. This could include taking an overarching look at the quality of education in a local area and asking questions about any poor attainment levels, regardless of school type.

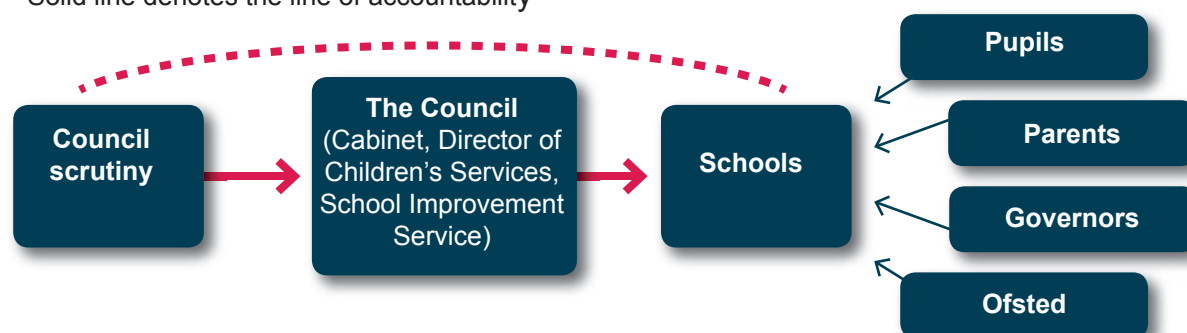
Case examples

Blackpool and East Riding of Yorkshire Councils have taken the direct route of reviewing a number of schools at each of their meetings. They felt that this gave opportunities for scrutiny councillors to review the effectiveness of all schools – challenging improvement services where things needed to improve and praising those that were raising the bar.

Richmond is moving to a commissioning council model and using scrutiny for strategic oversight of school performance at a council-wide level, not school by school. They systematically review topical issues such as place-planning and future education provision.

Hackney found it helpful to understand the lines of accountability and considered this for the role of scrutiny and holding schools to account. As the diagram below demonstrates, they concluded that the role of scrutiny was not to hold schools directly to account but to hold improvement services and senior officers within the education department to account for the support and challenge that they provide to schools.

- Semi-dotted line to connect Scrutiny with Schools denotes informal information sharing
- Solid line denotes the line of accountability



Identifying roles for overview and scrutiny in reviewing and monitoring performance

A number of topics and opportunities for scrutiny to add value to improving the performance of schools emerged from our case studies.

Much debate took place on the role of scrutiny in tackling under-performance of schools and it was clear from the conversations that the councils within this programme had tackled this in different ways.

Tips!

- ✓ Scrutiny could take an overview of school attainment in the council area and compare results with similar councils at all stages.
- ✓ Scrutiny could look at school Ofsted reports by exception, review improvement support and help prepare for Ofsted inspections of council support.
- ✓ Scrutiny is not performance management.
- ✓ Beware the time pressures of trying to scrutinise all your schools. Instead, set criteria to help you to select the best approach and focus on the places where you can make most impact; this could be of council procedures for monitoring performance and supporting school improvement.
- ✓ Make an annual challenge to the Executive councillor and officer on progress in closing the attainment gap within the council area and in comparison with similar authorities.
- ✓ Look at learning from the experience of federations of schools in terms of performance and improvement.

Suggested topics for scrutiny of performance

- Comparative results across the local authority area and with similar councils at key stages, GCSE and A level.
- The role of the council and local schools in bridging the gap in educational attainment.
- The effectiveness of education in making pupils ready for work.
- Thematic reviews e.g. Key Stage 2 literacy results, sixth forms, 14 – 19 provision, early years provision
- The local authority's support for looked after children and their educational attainment.
- School exclusions.
- Reviews with the head teacher and chair of governors of a school facing special measures or with underperformance to gain a clearer appreciation of the support and challenge that the school requires.
- Work with school leaders, the council's Executive member and the director of children's services and other appropriate officers to help carry out an informal 'dry-run Ofsted inspection' of the local authority's school improvement arrangements.

Reviewing approaches to school improvement and support services

Overview

In September 2013, Ofsted announced that annual inspection figures show that 39 per cent of schools had improved since their last inspection. In real terms this now means that 78 per cent of schools are graded “outstanding” or “good”, compared with fewer than 70 per cent last year. Sir Michael Wilshaw concluded that the inspection figures showed that “England’s school system is making some genuine and radical advances”.

Schools have been becoming autonomous for many years and are increasingly responsible for their own improvement – but the move to establishing Academies has given them additional freedoms away from central government such as the ability to adapt the national curriculum and national teacher’s pay and conditions thus moving them further away from councils. Despite this, from May 2013 Ofsted introduced a new inspection framework which will consider how well a council is fulfilling its general duty to promote high standards of education and to enable every child to fulfil their educational potential. Alongside this, councils still retain a role to act as champion for their children and to fulfil duties such as those to ensure there are sufficient school places.

So in this mixed world where there are continued expectations of councils in some aspects of educational provision, but increasing autonomy of schools, what can scrutiny do to help and support effective and appropriate school improvement services?

Identifying roles for scrutiny

School improvement services

Where provided by the council, there is more opportunity for scrutiny to monitor and challenge the support the council provides. Scrutiny can be the bridge between the school and the school improvement service to ensure that what is being provided makes an impact, is of high quality and addresses the need of schools.

The situation is more complex where Academies and Free Schools buy in support services from elsewhere. Here scrutiny could have a role in checking the effectiveness of the improvement support provided by Academy Chains.

Tips!

- ✓ Scrutiny committees need to understand the totality of school improvement locally – is it provided by the council and/or others?
- ✓ Listen to stories of success as well as of concern.
- ✓ Build effective working relationships (as detailed in the previous chapter) to allow for a better understanding of how improvement services are deployed within a school.
- ✓ Scrutiny may help to ensure that schools have access to advice, support and professional development that supports improvement from the council or elsewhere.
- ✓ Use scrutiny to help stakeholders to prepare for Ofsted inspections.

Recruitment and retention of leaders

Maintaining continuity and strength of leadership is vital for schools to improve. Whilst this seems less of an obvious task for scrutiny committees, they can assess whether there is a framework to recruit and retain leaders through monitoring turnover, identifying whether there is a training and development programme in place and listening to school leaders in terms of their success at retaining effective teachers, heads and deputies.

Tips!

- ✓ Use a council's influence to build the reputation of schools and the area including through ward councillors taking a more active and supportive role within a school.
- ✓ Monitor recruitment and retention of head teachers, senior leaders, governors and chairs of governors – reviewing the advice given to schools by council human resources staff.
- ✓ Seek to develop joint training and leadership development for champions of their patch (scrutiny councillors and all governors, not only council appointed governors).

School-to-school support

Outstanding schools make it their business to provide school-to-school support as part of their on-going journey to excellence and to help those in need of support. Academy chains have been established and some maintained schools have been federated in order to support each other's improvement journey and ensure the transfer of excellence across schools, this is a potentially significant area for scrutiny to explore. This could include assessing what a school excels in or needs to improve, gaining an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of schools on an individual basis (using scrutiny's improved links, as detailed in the previous section) and asking questions of chains or federations in terms of the outcomes of their school-to-school support in order to share those insights more widely.

Scrutiny could also have a role in ensuring that all local schools are working collaboratively to drive school improvement or check that all schools are buying in improvement support from somewhere, even if it is not from the council.

Scrutiny's evidence gathering would provide a picture of the key inputs and structures to promote excellence and improvement that can be shared across an area.

Tips!

- ✓ Carry out a review of school-to-school support – involve school leaders, school improvement services, education partnerships, Academies and their chains, Free Schools and maintained schools and their federations.
- ✓ Encourage buddying and sharing across schools.
- ✓ Where it is difficult for scrutiny to review the performance of all schools, seek to hold ‘collaboratives’ or ‘clusters’ to account for the results and the effectiveness of their ‘school-to-school’ improvement systems across those schools.

Engagement with stakeholders and the public

It is possible to develop a role for scrutiny to assess how effective a school is at listening and responding to pupils, parents, the community and stakeholders. Scrutiny might also explore how it can involve pupils, parents, the community and stakeholders in reviews of schools and school improvement.

Parental insights are invaluable in any review of admissions procedures, eg the clarity of information provided, the ease with which applications may be made, the information that they receive about place allocations and their experience, if any, of appeals.

As ever, effective scrutiny will depend upon getting to know individual schools better, understanding how these stakeholders are engaged with their School Development

Plan, looking at how open schools are in terms of meetings with parents and considering whether schools offer community focused activities. The best schools build on the views of all stakeholders and, whilst they may not be able to deliver everything that people want, scrutiny can assess whether they have a systematic approach and culture of involvement.

As is the case with most scrutiny reviews, you will need to encourage all stakeholders to be involved and be open to new ways of reaching out to local people – parents, young people and children.

There are many good examples of councils that have involved young people within scrutiny reviews and some of these are highlighted within CfPS’s publication ‘Tomorrow’s People’⁴.

Tips!

- ✓ Use Public Question Time at council meetings.
- ✓ Use web-casting.
- ✓ Show the public the work of scrutiny in relation to schools.
- ✓ Draw on the experience of scrutiny across the country in engaging with children and young people, sourcing ideas from the CfPS website and library of reviews.

⁴ <http://www.cfps.org.uk/domains/cfps.org.uk/local/media/uploads/youngpeopleguide2final.pdf>

Suggested topics for scrutiny of school improvement and support

- The whole education approach of the council from early years to post-16
- School improvement services, whether within the local authority or outsourced
- Local authority provision of a schools liaison team, or similar
- Local authority provision of support for special educational needs
- Support of the local authority for co-optees on education scrutiny committees
- The local councillor as school governor and local authority support for them
- The effect of traded services
- The Home to School Transport Service



Reviewing governance

Overview

Given the refreshed school accountability system with the growth in number of Academies and the emergence of Free Schools, as well as the new ways that school improvement is delivered, scrutiny committees and their officers need to understand better the new lines of accountability and with whom they need to work. Then, having determined with whom the relationships need to be developed or sustained, contact needs to be made and shared understanding developed.

Scrutiny can play a role by exploring if there is effective governance. Although schools have more autonomy, many continue to have local authority governors. Even if they do not, council scrutiny might explore new accountabilities and the openness of schools, the nature and effectiveness of school leadership and the role and performance of governing bodies. Many councillors are also local authority governors and have an appreciation of education and the effectiveness of local schools. They could be involved in helping to develop relationships with schools and scrutiny and could be witnesses or co-optees on task and finish groups on matters relating to education. In general, as outlined earlier, local councillors should be more involved with their schools, including but not only as school governors.

Whilst there are fundamental differences between members of a governing body (whatever the school management structure) and scrutiny councillors, there are also some parallels. These include:

- providing constructive challenge and helping to develop proposals on strategy and policy
- monitoring school performance and providing challenge where appropriate
- being satisfied about the integrity of financial information and the robustness of controls and risk management
- refreshing their knowledge and skills and participating fully in an induction programme
- showing integrity and probity, instilling an appropriate culture, applying appropriate values and exhibiting appropriate behaviour
- insisting on high quality information in sufficient time for meetings
- taking account of parents', children's and other stakeholders' views
- disclosure of relevant interests.

Yet there are very few opportunities for scrutiny and governors to work together and learn from each other and support services for governors and scrutiny often sit within different departments of a council. With authorities increasingly recognising the vital and complex role played by governors in ensuring school effectiveness, it would be useful to understand the complementary roles of governors and scrutiny councillors and how they can work together locally to improve education for children and young people.

Identifying roles for scrutiny

Role and efficacy of school governors

It is usual for a council to provide varying degrees of support for governance of schools, eg training, information and clerking services, so there are opportunities for scrutiny to ensure that these services are fit for purpose and used to benefit all governing bodies. However an untapped resource and conduit of information is the council governor. Maximising use of this role and the support provided to council governors could improve the challenge provided by the whole governing body and can certainly be used to improve communication between schools and scrutiny councillors. More effective council governor roles and support will help councils to keep an eye on education from a distance.

Tips!

- ✓ Explore the support that the council provides to all governors.
- ✓ Understand the different types of governor and their roles – in particular the role of the council governor.
- ✓ Review whether good governors are being recruited.
- ✓ Review whether governors have the right skills and support.
- ✓ Remember that Academies are allowed up to one council governor, so might be interested in a scrutiny role regarding support for and the selection of councillors on governing bodies.

Involving statutory co-optees

There was some debate between the programme participants surrounding the role of statutory co-optees. There are regulations requiring the co-option of church (Church of England and Roman Catholic), and parent governor representatives onto council committees dealing with education. These include voting rights on education matters only. Some education or children's services scrutiny committees also co-opt youth representatives and it is at the discretion of the council whether they are given voting rights on matters relating to education and youth provision.

It was felt that there was value in having co-optees to provide a link to the wider community and give broader representation and that they could fill the gap in the skills of the committee sharing resources, insights and ideas. However, their understanding and contributions appear to vary widely within and across committees, which is possibly a reflection of the nature of their induction and support, time availability and competing personal commitments.

Tips!

- ✓ Ensure that education co-optees are inducted and kept fully briefed on matters relating to education.
- ✓ Consider co-opting youth representatives eg from a local youth council or Youth Parliament and ensure they are inducted, briefed and involved.
- ✓ Ensure that co-optees have an understanding of their role and the nature of scrutiny.
- ✓ Encourage and support co-optees to be involved in task and finish groups and other forms of scrutiny review.
- ✓ Review the views and engagement of co-optees and their relationship with the bodies they represent, their recruitment, training and engagement and identify action required to improve their understanding of scrutiny, their involvement and the support they need.

Political decision making

Participants recognised that the council continues to have powers and duties in relation to education, so scrutiny needs to retain an internal council focus on its own decisions around education support and resource allocation.

The council leader, executive member covering education and children's services, and the director of education and/or children's services all have a significant role in decision making about education. This may include:

- school place planning
- support for vulnerable pupils including those with Special Educational Needs
- admissions policies including the provision of information and the handling of appeals
- the resources made available for school improvement
- the level of in-council staffing for school improvement and support
- provision or not of clerking services and training for governing bodies
- provision or not of human resources advice
- funding of Home to School transport and Pupil Referral Units
- non-school support for learning such as the provision of libraries and their opening hours, leisure facilities, playing fields, public health and even housing, given their role in the wider determinants of educational attainment
- council policies and budget allocations for looked after children, children's social care, safeguarding, and the activity of the council as a corporate parent.

Potential outcomes from scrutiny of council decisions relating to education were identified as:

- better relationships for the council with all schools in its area
- an improved and extended offer of council support to schools
- clarification of the role of the council
- better understanding of how scrutiny might help all stakeholders in education
- acceptance of the council's responsibility for the whole area and all the children who live there.

Tips!

- ✓ Hold a briefing for scrutiny councillors on the Government's agenda for education and schools, including the Secretary of State's proposal for 'developing moral purpose'.
- ✓ Hold a briefing for scrutiny councillors on the new accountabilities in education and the emerging local school systems, including Federations, Academies, Academy chains and Free Schools.
- ✓ Hold regular (though not necessarily frequent) meetings with the director of children's services and other relevant officers, the executive member, teaching unions, a head teachers forum, schools forums, parent groups, teaching alliances and similar.
- ✓ Hold the leader, executive member and director of children's services or education to account for their monitoring of Ofsted inspections and school results and their preparation for Ofsted inspection of school improvement support by the council.
- ✓ Scrutinise school place planning and council school building projects and the use of planning gain that is earmarked for education.
- ✓ Look at the council's policy in relation to relationships with Academies and Free Schools and their attitude and relation to Academy improvement chains.

Suggested topics for scrutiny of governance

- Local authority as the 'champion of pupils and parents'.
- Local school leadership against the four Ofsted criteria: namely the achievement of pupils at the school, the quality of teaching in the school, the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school and the quality of leadership in, and management of, the school.
- Local authority intelligence gathering about the range of curricula across all schools – and what they do with the intelligence.
- Engagement with any governors networks, including consideration of the support provided by the local authority for all school governors.
- Admissions procedures and appeals.
- School to school improvement arrangements in-house or outsourced.
- Succession planning by schools.
- Performance monitoring of relevant KPIs by the school leadership.
- School leadership's pupil plans, differentiation and alignment.
- Collaboration with schools forum or similar.
- Inclusion across the local authority.
- Pupil behaviour and attendance across the local authority.

Reviewing and understanding resource allocation

Overview

As councils' children's services budgets come under pressure, the question of maximising the impact of resources becomes more important. It's also important to ensure that schools allocate funding according to need and that targeted funding provided to the council or to schools is utilised effectively. These are roles that scrutiny can play, both externally, through the influence of council governors where appointed and through building better relationships with schools and also internally, through the budget and policy scrutiny mechanism.

Scrutiny roles could include:

- understanding the authority's strategy for targeting expenditure and working with children and young people at a time when schools have increased autonomy and providers of schools are becoming increasingly diverse, thus making it harder to gain intelligence about them
- looking at the range of services being provided, whether 'traded' or otherwise and how the pattern of services are likely to change in the future
- reviewing and helping to choose the right performance indicators that will provide assurance as to the quality and effectiveness of any relevant strategy and delivery
- monitoring spend and outturn figures.

Identifying roles for scrutiny

Place planning

Councils have a statutory duty for school place planning and shaping future education provision. Scrutiny can play a valuable role in providing insight and challenge to plans made by a council. This can include a check on the quality and source of data and future projections, compared with census and other demographic information, for example.

Scrutiny can:

- bring together and listen to the views of a wide set of stakeholders
- work across councils
- represent the community and act on behalf of parents
- review and interpret data.

Tips!

- ✓ Continue to ensure scrutiny of council budgets that relate to education in the annual budget cycle.
- ✓ Monitor funding allocations by central government to the council and schools within the council area and decide whether it is possible to scrutinise their use and outcomes.
- ✓ Look at data that is used in place planning and projections alongside the location of all types of school in the area.

Use of the Pupil Premium

The majority of participants identified this as a possible scrutiny topic. It was recognised that schools use pupil premium funding differently. Some use it to benefit those pupils that receive it, despite some of these pupils not needing additional support to achieve well. Others who have an in-depth understanding of the performance of all of their children target spending on the pupil premium where it is needed more – and so pupils who are not eligible for free school meals benefit as well as those that are.

Scrutiny can challenge the use of pupil funding – gaining an understanding of local practices and what works best and comparing local schools' application of the funding with schools in other councils. Scrutiny can help assess whether the funding is achieving the required outcomes in different schools and hold the school leadership to account for making best use of an additional resource.

Scrutiny is able to access relevant information as schools must publish details of their pupil premium, how it is spent and what the outcomes are for children receiving it. This is relatively new data that schools now publish and will give a great deal of insight into school planning and improvement that scrutiny can use to build up a picture of the school.

Tips!

- ✓ Scrutiny can offer a holistic view in terms of the use of the pupil premium, the selection of children who might benefit and the sharing of good practice from other authorities.
- ✓ Scrutiny may identify aspects of deprivation that influence educational attainment and make suggestions to other relevant council services or partners that could help them also to address this inequality, drawing on evidence in assessing the use of the pupil premium.
- ✓ Scrutiny might look at what works and celebrate the success of schools in making an impact through the pupil premium.
- ✓ Scrutiny could be used to facilitate transparency of the use of the pupil premium, evaluate the teaching system and make recommendations and have a better understanding of the needs of pupils and their schools.
- ✓ Scrutiny could help to ensure compliance with a school's statutory duty for publishing information on the use of and outcomes from the pupil premium.

Suggested topics for scrutiny of resource allocation

- Local authority budgetary support for schools and school improvement and related services.
- Research data on the Capital Programme.
- Local authority input into the school improvement strategy and services.
- Recruitment and retention of school leaders and staff.
- Home to School Transport budget.
- Cost of value added in School Improvement Services.
- Services provided to schools by the local authority that are bought by Academies as well as used by maintained schools.



Summary and conclusions

Our interest is in how scrutiny can help to improve educational attainment and the prospects for all the children in our councils. The case studies and other material in this publication indicate the many ways in which scrutiny can develop in regard to the continuing responsibilities of councils for education, as well as by providing a means to ensure accountability of all schools. From our work and the case studies, it is clear that council scrutiny has a significant role to play in relation to education.

Furthermore, we are convinced that scrutiny has a role in education regardless of the form of governance of schools. This applies both in exercising its powers to scrutinise the services directly provided by the council and in engaging with all schools whilst recognising their autonomy. Scrutiny may use its influence and credibility to act on behalf of its community, engage stakeholders, work with decision-makers and providers to seek to improve education and where appropriate to hold decision-makers and providers to account.

Reflecting on the comparisons with health scrutiny as a 'lever to improve the health of local people', we feel that scrutiny can be a 'lever to improve the educational achievement of children'. This is an opportunity to build relationships not just between scrutiny and schools but across all stakeholders in education.

Scrutiny can bring:

- independent support and challenge to schools, regardless of their governance model
- relevant experience of and skills from

working with health and social care (where, as in education, partners and council commission and provide services, and where scrutiny can provide internal and external challenge and support in relation to policies, services, public experience and outcomes)

- a track record in building strong effective working relationships and practices
- skills in consensus-building through stakeholder engagement as a core way of working.

We hope that this resource will help other scrutineers to draw on this good practice and to consider some of the suggested ways to scrutinise education and school leaders in order to improve school support and educational attainment of children and young people in your council.

CfPS would like to hear from you and how you are scrutinising education; and also how you have drawn on this resource in developing new accountabilities in education. Please use the blank pages at the back of this publication to jot down your thoughts and next steps. The remainder of this publication includes:

- Appendix 1 outlines questions to help you start to think about scrutiny and education. The questions have been adapted from those produced by the West Midlands Scrutiny Network (CfPS wishes to thank the network for sharing these questions). They include additional questions highlighted by this programme and should provide a tool to help you consider your own arrangements and to plan for the future.
- Appendix 2 provides the case studies of councils who already have undertaken scrutiny of local education provision and support and of their schools.

Appendix 1

Questions

- **What reviews have you undertaken regarding education?**
- **What topics would you now wish to review after reading this publication?**
- **Which education services are the council 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?
 - How might you scrutinise performance across your council?
- **How is the council ensuring that it will still be able to deliver its statutory duties?**
 - What are its statutory duties?
 - How is the council ensuring that safeguarding remains the top priority?
- **The council will continue to have a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places in the area. What information does the council have about:**
 - Proposals for Free Schools?
 - Plans of schools to increase their admissions numbers?
- **Is the council considering trading education services with schools?**
 - How will the council ensure the sustainability of those services when in competition with other service providers?
- **Which education services has the council stopped providing to schools?**
 - How will outcomes for young people be affected if external service providers cannot fill the gap?
- **Will the council be seeking an agreement with Academies regarding access to information – for example, to enable scrutiny of educational attainment and compliance with the admissions code?**

- **Will the council continue to operate a School Admissions Forum, following removal of the statutory duty?**
 - If so, what changes would be beneficial to its terms of reference?
- **How is the council continuing to foster collaborative relationships with schools in the area?**
 - Does the council have a role in school-based partnerships?
 - What about the relationship with local councillors?
 - What about the relationship with the scrutiny function?
 - How do you currently work with the full range of schools in your area?
 - What actions could you take to improve links with all types of school in your area?
 - What are the implications for a scrutiny committee's statutory education co-optees?
 - How could you raise the profile of scrutiny with school leaders?
- **How will the council work with all schools to take forward initiatives in the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Green Paper and support for children and young people with SEN?⁵**
 - How will you achieve an appropriate balance between scrutiny of the council's role in education and direct scrutiny of the range of local schools?
- **How will the council influence better educational outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people in the council area?**
 - How will you achieve an appropriate balance between scrutiny of the council's role in education and direct scrutiny of the range of local schools?

⁵ (The Green Paper 'Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability' was published on 11 March 2011; see <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/sen/b0075291/green-paper>)

Appendix 2 Case studies

Over the following pages you will find out more about the work and reviews of seven of the councils that worked on this project.

Each one gives more details on:

- their context and the reasons for the review
- what they did
- learning and tips
- what they are planning to do next.

Strengthening the family of schools – the role of Birmingham City Council

Background

Like others, Birmingham wanted to respond positively to the changing educational landscape. The changes risked a growing misconception that the council no longer has a role to play in our children's education; in fact nothing could be further from the truth. The Secretary of State for Education has made clear that he sees councils taking a strategic role in the educational system, while retaining three core responsibilities:

1. Ensuring a sufficient supply of school places.
2. Tackling underperformance in schools and ensuring high standards.
3. Supporting vulnerable children.

What Birmingham did

The Scrutiny Inquiry was conducted via a short series of formal committee meetings during September and October 2012 along with a visit to a city Academy. We heard evidence in the meetings from a range of schools and stakeholders. The key questions for the Inquiry were:

- In the light of more schools in Birmingham becoming Academies what role should the City Council play to support all schools and children?
- What is the new strategic role for councils in local education provision?

The timeframe for the Inquiry meant that there were several areas we were unable to probe, and the findings from the review are very much seen as a baseline to build upon. The ten recommendations are focused on improving processes and relationships.

They covered: developing a vision for education; school improvement; school places; and the role of councillors in understanding and challenging performance at a local level and championing their local schools.

Learning and tips

- The review identified several challenges, but the one overwhelming message heard was the need for a new debate on education locally to develop a shared vision for education. This will be central to ensuring that the needs of all our children are met, whichever type of school they attend.
- Don't be afraid to question; you are a 'critical friend'.
- Be clear about your objectives; identify what you can influence.
- Make achievable recommendations that add value and track progress.
- Hold officers and the executive to account on the council's role in education.
- Visit schools to hear at first-hand about issues that are affecting them.

What's next?

Committee members see this report as an important step in establishing how the City Council can work with all schools within the increasingly diverse and autonomous school landscape and how councillors can develop a role as effective 'Education Champions' for children, parents and communities.

Members will continue to explore issues relating to the future role of the council in this new educational landscape and this will form the basis of the committee's on going work.

For more information, please use this link:

<http://tinyurl.com/nqvcq9p>

Scrutiny of schools in Blackpool

Background

In October 2012, the Scrutiny Committee appointed a Review Panel to undertake scrutiny of education matters, including the consideration of school performance information and Ofsted Inspection Reports.

The Panel's role is to consider and make recommendations on school performance information including attendance at schools, attainment of children and Ofsted Inspection Reports; and to review and make recommendations on key strategic documents and issues affecting schools such as exclusions.

What Blackpool did

The Review Panel meets approximately six times per year and considers up to four schools at each meeting (comprising a mix of schools e.g. primary, Academy, secondary and special). Schools are considered on a rolling programme and meetings are held at a school in Blackpool and at a time to allow attendance by head teachers and governors, if requested by Members. Time prior to the meeting is used for councillors to undertake a tour of the school.

The Panel has made a number of enquiries and observations in relation to the schools that have been reviewed to date, including the impact of pupil stability on absence levels, the high levels of special educational needs at schools and the steps made by schools to improve attainment. The Panel has also considered data demonstrating that Blackpool schools have significant levels of children in receipt of free school meals and higher than average pupil transience.

The Panel review Ofsted Inspection reports as and when they are published and receives regular updates regarding improvements at schools, monitoring the implementation of any action plans that may have been put in place.

Learning and tips

- Hold meetings in schools (with the permission of the school) and take a tour to enable councillors to get to know the school.
- Build relationships with schools to ensure they are approachable and to allow for better cooperation, if and when required.
- Don't take attainment in isolation – use the links between Ofsted reports and school performance data (including absence, transience, free school meals, special educational needs) to get a holistic view.
- Get an understanding of who is accountable to the Panel – is it the Executive Member, the Director of Children's Services, the School Improvement Team, the governing body or the head teacher?

What's next?

In November 2013 the Panel is going to review its work over the first year of operation to identify how to take work forward to next year – building on what has worked well in meetings and also what they have learnt from being a part of this national project for CfPS. Amongst other questions, the Panel will be considering the following:

- Is the Panel receiving the right level of information?
- Is the Panel challenging the right people in the right way? Where does accountability lie? Council officers, school governors, head teachers?
- Is the Panel being challenging enough?

For more information, please use this link:

www.blackpool.gov.uk

Scrutiny of schools in Buckinghamshire

Background

In 2012 there were already over 30 Academies in Buckinghamshire, almost all secondary schools. Some councillors thought this meant absolute autonomy for those schools and were unaware of the key strategic role played by the council. Others were concerned how the statutory responsibilities of the council for the education and wellbeing of its children were being discharged without the traditional top down relationship; and others expressed concern for the accountability of Academies in general.

An emerging independent learning trust had reported regularly to the Overview and Scrutiny Commissioning Committee (OSCC) – but had not been the subject of review. It was in this context that the OSCC commissioned a review to explore relationships between Buckinghamshire Academies and the county council.

What Buckinghamshire did

A review group was tasked with providing an overview of how working arrangements between Academies and the local authority have developed since the 2010 Academies Act, in particular around supporting vulnerable children, standards and provision of places; and potential roles around local involvement and accountability, including new roles for local councillors in working with and building relationships with schools. They did this through a variety of meetings with cabinet members and education professionals, head teachers, literature review and research.

Learning and tips

- It is key for the local authority to define its new strategic role in relation to education – built around collaboration and projects such as the creation of the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust.
- There is strong commitment in Buckinghamshire to exploring collaborative working between schools and the local authority.
- Councillors have a strong role as a link between schools, the council and other organisations, and as ‘critical friends’ of schools.
- There are opportunities for sharing good practice including school-to-school development.
- The Cabinet Member is held accountable overall.
- It is important to engage with as wide a group as possible and especially with head teachers, chairs of governing bodies and parents.

What's next?

- The council embarked along a path of continuous adjustment and culture change. It demonstrated commitment to a new style of collaborative working to fulfil their responsibilities. This will be reviewed again by scrutiny.
- As the future is in part dependent on the success of the proposed Buckinghamshire Learning Trust, scrutiny will be updated formally on the early operation of the Trust in Spring/Summer 2014, including information on commercial operation and the mitigation of identified risks and support for collaborative working.
- Member induction will include guidance on why it is important for councillors to get to know their local schools. Options for a ‘protocol’ around school and councillor working relationships are to be explored.
- The new Education Skills and Children’s Services Select Committee is continuing to tackle education issues with a review into the causes of the widening achievement gap.

For more information, please use this link:

<http://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/documents/s27387/Chairmans%20update%20-%20Learning%20New%20Ways.pdf>

Scrutiny of schools by East Riding of Yorkshire Council

Background

Scrutiny of education falls to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee and Review Panels at East Riding. The work of the Sub-Committee is divided up between ordinary meetings and Ofsted meetings. The Sub-Committee has co-opted members including parent governors, young people, Teachers' Union and Church representatives.

What East Riding did

The Sub-Committee meets seven times per year to review subjects such as school funding, 14-19 education provision, term time holiday, special educational needs, school admissions and road safety training within schools; and four times a year to view all the Ofsted reports for East Riding schools. Head teachers and chairs of governors from a cross section of schools (including Academies) are invited to meet with the Sub-Committee, alongside the School Improvement Service. Councillors ask questions about the Ofsted report; what the school is doing to address areas for improvement; and how the School Improvement Service is supporting them; and since the introduction of the new Ofsted framework, also ask those schools requiring improvement, how long it will be before they are a good school.

Review Panels are set up to undertake in-depth reviews of specific issues. A Review Panel was set up following the release of the 'Achievement and Attainment Tables' in 2011, which showed that some East Riding secondary schools had not performed as well as had been expected. The Panel looked into the reasons why, visited and met with a number of secondary schools and sought the views of all secondary schools on the 2011 examination results.

The review recommended that an 'Excellence for All Fund' of £200,000 be established and invited all LA schools to bid for funding to undertake initiatives to raise attainment. This was well received and has led to increased attainment.

Currently the Panel is examining the performance of East Riding Schools following the 2011/12 annual report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, which highlighted that schools in the East Riding were falling below the national average in terms of the proportion

that have been judged to be good or outstanding. The review is examining and evaluating the effectiveness of schools in the East Riding and the measures implemented by schools to monitor, review and improve their outcomes. This is due to report later in 2013.

Learning and tips

- Ofsted meetings provide an excellent opportunity to build good relationships with schools, enabling the Sub-Committee to monitor performance, identify good practice and follow up issues raised by schools.
- A focused approach via a Review Panel has been effective in making recommendations which have made a positive impact on children and young people in the East Riding.
- Visits to schools, children's centres and businesses are invaluable and help to build relationships and involvement in the scrutiny process; councillors hear first-hand about their experiences and issues.
- The Portfolio Holder for Education is invited to participate in meetings and to be held to account as necessary.

What's next?

The Sub-Committee is keen to ensure it is taking a holistic approach to the performance of schools, comparing performance of schools across the East Riding and nationally. It is also considering ways in which it can involve young people more effectively in the topics it considers.

For more information, please use this link:
<http://www2.eastriding.gov.uk/council/committees/overview-and-scrutiny-committees/children-and-young-people-sub-committee/>

Hackney's Scrutiny Review: The Council's Role in the New Education Environment

Background

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission focuses on all services provided by Hackney Learning Trust, children's social services, and other issues relating to young people in the borough.

The Commission chose to review this topic to try to understand and shape the local authority's future role in education, and the relationship between schools and local councillors. This was influenced by changes to policy nationally as well as locally as education services were transferred back to Hackney Council having been run by the Learning Trust since 2002.

What Hackney did

They sought clarity about what the council expects from schools in the borough; and explored the role of ward councillors in relation to schools and how that relationship could be improved. They:

- gathered evidence over four months
- heard from the Learning Trust; Sir Michael Barber, a former Chief Adviser to the Secretary of State for Education on School Standards and an educationist; Rick Muir, Associate Director for Public Services at the Institute for Public Policy Research and London Councils
- surveyed councillors and head teachers
- councillors listened to governors and met head teachers in their wards and reported back.

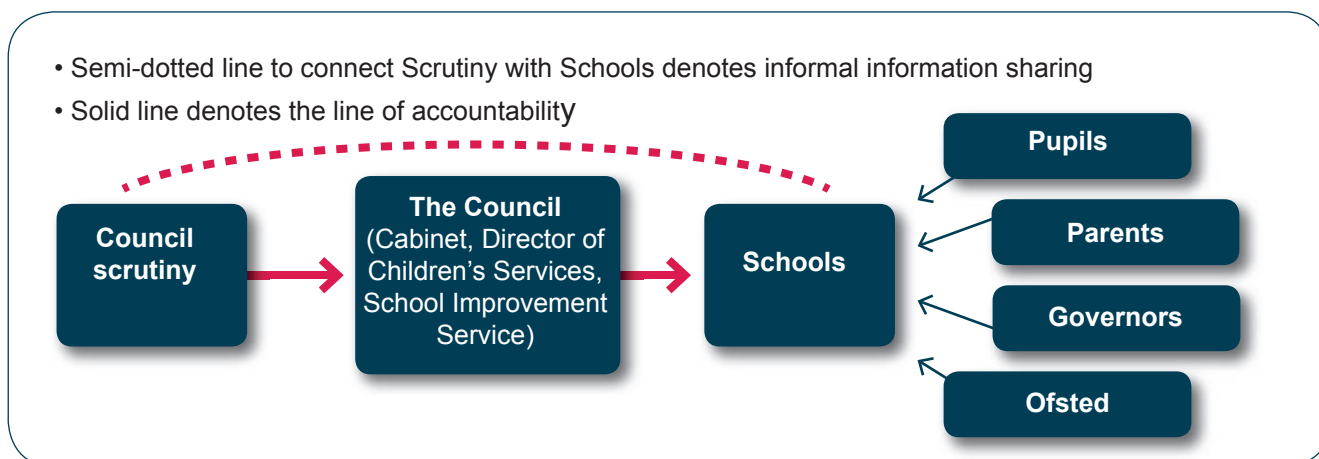
Learning and tips

- Councillors can be a key link between schools and a council by promoting wider engagement with the local community, and educating children and young people about local democracy.
- Being a school governor is one of the best ways to link with a school, but challenges are the time commitment and getting a balanced coverage across wards.
- There is a good track record of councillor involvement with schools when involved in a scrutiny review, as evidenced in the report.
- You need to understand the lines of accountability. There is a role for scrutiny in holding schools to account and asking school leaders questions about performance. But scrutiny should not hold head teachers directly to account for the performance of their school. Instead the Committee should hold the Head of Education Services and the Cabinet Member to account for how effectively they were challenging and supporting the school to improve.

What's next?

The Cabinet response to the Commission's findings and recommendations was positive and it has agreed with everything the Commission said. The recommendations were largely about the council providing information, advice and support for councillors to develop their relationships with schools effectively.

For more information, please use this link: www.hackney.gov.uk/Councils-Role-New-Education-Environment-Scrutiny-Review



Scrutiny of schools in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

Background

Richmond's vision is to become a fully 'Commissioning Council.' Work is underway across all areas to commission and procure the services the council needs to meet the existing and future needs of its residents. This includes a programme within Education and Children's Services to create 'Achieving for Children'; a joint company, with the Royal Borough of Kingston. The challenge of growing numbers of Academies and Free Schools also raises wider issues of accountability and transparency for scrutiny councillors.

What Richmond did

Richmond is not doing a specific piece of time limited work. Instead they are focusing on ensuring that scrutiny is fit for purpose for the council model and wider changing education landscape. They have:

- A strong partnership of schools developed through Education Richmond. The challenge for scrutiny is to build good relationships with this body through its officer links to enable whole scrutiny of cross borough school and education issues. Officers attending as witnesses need to provide reassurance that schools are continuing to work together and are open to scrutiny and involvement.
- Looked at what the councillor role will be in the future through the council's Strategy Panel.
- Managed the agenda for committee meetings to ensure that the range of bodies and individuals are invited and the full breadth of issues are scrutinised.
- Scrutinised key issues such as school place planning and future education provision. A range of detailed meetings have taken place on these issues to involve scrutiny prior to decision making.
- Separated out council statutory duties from the delivery by Academy Trusts and Free Schools to ensure they are effectively scrutinised. They are asking: What happens where there is underperformance? How can scrutiny maintain relationships and helpfully challenge?
- Developed an agreed way to engage councillors as fully as possible in the commissioning and procurement process. Councillors are engaged

in looking at: what is needed to meet the needs of people accessing services; how can the specification be developed to meet these needs; what are the strengths of existing arrangements which need to be carried forward; and how can value for money and quality be ensured? In respect of post contract award monitoring, they are asking: how has the contract bedded in; are the outcomes being delivered; and are there any areas where expectations haven't been met?

Learning and tips

- Restrict agendas to only three items per meeting to ensure focus and more detailed scrutiny.
- Get out and about – scrutiny councillors engage best when they can see things happening on the ground.
- Involve young people through use of a volunteer youth scrutiny panel to gather the views of their peers.
- Make sure that scrutiny looks in two directions – with 'schools as customers' and the 'council as provider', and ask if expectations are being met.
- Focus on outcomes.

What's next?

- Continue to be flexible – ensuring scrutiny adapts to meet the requirements of the emerging 'Commissioning Council Model'; including working closely with partners and schools to ensure good relationships can be maintained and further developed.
- Refresh the councillor role to keep pace with the changing council and ensure that scrutiny continues to play a valuable role.
- Focus on ensuring continued engagement with schools across the borough which is meaningful and challenging so as to ensure the highest quality of education for the children and families in the borough.

For more information, please use this link:
http://www.richmond.gov.uk/council_committees_list?mgI=mgCommitteeDetails.aspx&ID=536

Scrutiny of schools in Solihull

Background

Solihull was keen to explore and understand the extent of the education changes locally and whether scrutiny could be used as a lever for holding schools to account for their performance.

What Solihull did

Tasked by the Chief Executive, Solihull scrutiny officers began to examine legislation to explore what powers scrutiny had to call in head teachers and governors and hold them to account for the performance of their school. Despite a wealth of legislation governing most other public bodies, they found that legislation and powers in respect of education were limited, even non-existent.

So Solihull concluded that in the absence of powers it needed to build on its current working practices and relationships with schools and develop these further to ensure that the council is able to fulfil its statutory role for children. Building relationships with schools and their governing bodies in support of voluntary cooperation was found to be undoubtedly the most appropriate means of getting either a chair of governors or head teacher to the table. From research they identified the following practices as ways to get schools to work with scrutiny:

- Scrutiny needs to show the added value that could result for schools if they are engaged in any particular activity.
- Schools are more likely to engage if the scrutiny is focused on a specific problem rather than a particular school.
- It is better to gather evidence from schools in a more informal way ie 1:1 meetings between a scrutiny councillor and a head teacher or chair of governors
- It is useful to engage with school governing bodies through council representatives on those bodies and/or by co-opting governors onto scrutiny committees or a task and finish group.

The Committee recommended that scrutiny should seek to work with school governing bodies in sharing scrutiny skills and possibly to undertake joint activity on areas of mutual interest.

The Committee also looked at the role of statutory co-optees and felt that the changing relationship between councils and local education providers may provide an opportunity to rethink this role, working with co-optees to ensure that their skills, expertise and time can be used in the most effective ways possible.

Learning and tips

- There is little in legislation to require a school to report to or attend scrutiny meetings. However using any such power should be a last resort anyway. The answer is to build better relationships and links with schools instead.
- It is useful to hold scrutiny in educational settings and to build links and relationships with schools and related stakeholders.
- It is important to undertake deep scrutiny through task and finish groups and to hold subject specific meetings and reviews on specific and focussed topics, such as 'narrowing the gap' and 'developing skills for the future'.
- It is important to make sure that scrutiny is effective in holding to account the lead councillor, the director of children's services and a school where there are performance issues.

Next steps

Solihull is looking at ways to strengthen its links with schools and in particular the role of the ward councillor.

For more information, please use this link:
<http://www.solihull.gov.uk/decisions/overviewandscrutiny.htm>



accountability, transparency, involvement

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