

Bidston Avenue Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105060
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	336410
Inspection dates	10–11 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Mrs Kathleen McArthur

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community School
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	413
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr George Davies
Headteacher	Mr S Brady
Date of previous school inspection	January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at pupils' books, policies, documents, minutes of meetings, school and national data, and 65 parental questionnaires.

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

- how well pupils are challenged, particularly the more able
- the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the effectiveness of arrangements to promote community cohesion
- how effectively leaders and managers evaluate school performance and contribute to improvement planning.

Information about the school

Bidston Avenue Primary School is much larger than most primary schools. Nearly all the pupils are of White British heritage. A small number are from other minority ethnic backgrounds, with a few who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is almost twice the national average. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The Early Years Foundation Stage provides two Reception classes.

Significant changes in leadership since the previous inspection include a new headteacher and deputy headteacher, and other senior posts. Major construction work to link the two school buildings was being carried out at the time of the inspection.

The school holds many externally validated awards, including Basic Skills, Activemark, Healthy Schools and Eco-School Bronze.

The Bidston Avenue Pre-school operates on the site. This is run privately and is subject to a separate inspection by Ofsted.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school that provides outstanding care, guidance and support for every pupil and builds on excellent partnerships to fulfil its stated aim of 'creating opportunities for talents and interests to grow'. Pupils feel very safe and secure and gain memorable experiences in this happy, harmonious environment. Parents are very satisfied. 'My son gets up every morning excited and keen to learn.' and 'Staff put children first.' were typical comments. The school gives good value for money.

Pupils achieve well. A recent focus on improving key skills in literacy and numeracy is leading to rising standards, especially in mathematics. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are below the levels expected for their age. Here they get off to a good start and continue to make good progress through the school and reach average levels of attainment. However, the more able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged to attain the higher levels, particularly in writing at Key Stage 2. Pupils gain good reading skills but are less successful in structuring and composing their writing. Very skilled support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the small number learning to speak English as an additional language means they progress at the same rate as their classmates.

Good relationships between pupils and staff contribute strongly to good learning and behaviour. One pupil commented, 'Our teachers work as a team.' and many said how much they enjoy their lessons. Good teaching and imaginative activities ensure pupils are keen to learn and work hard. They know how to look after their health and trust staff to help with any problems. Opportunities to take responsibility are eagerly accepted and help pupils become increasingly responsible and mature. They cooperate well at work and play, and respect all the cultures represented in school, but are less aware of the wider and global communities. The exciting curriculum has some outstanding features that enrich pupils' experiences. For example, residential visits, the many opportunities to sing and perform, film making, access to the school portal from home and the wide variety of popular activities and clubs.

The dedicated and committed leadership and management team, ably supported by well-informed governors and staff has raised aspirations for everyone, including the pupils who are keen to achieve their learning targets. There is no complacency: targets for on-going school improvement are ambitious and challenging. Inspection findings matched the school's accurate evaluation of its overall effectiveness. Standards have risen, progress has accelerated and the building has been developed

to provide a welcoming, stimulating and well resourced environment. Consequently, there is good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards by:
 - ensuring the more able pupils are consistently challenged to reach higher levels
 - improving the structure and composition of pupils' writing.
- Extend pupils' awareness of lifestyles and cultures in the wider and global communities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils/children

2

Almost all groups of pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points. Good teaching captures their enthusiasm so they enjoy learning, listen carefully and work hard. Lesson observations, pupils' books and school data show that progress is good, and most pupils are on course to reach their challenging targets. Specific, focused support ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language progress well in relation to their starting points.

By the end of Year 2, the attainment of many pupils is now close to the expected levels for their age, but in 2009 few reached the higher level. However, this represents good progress for these pupils in relation to their starting points which were well below those usually seen when they started school. Pupils read well and this supports learning in all subjects, but their writing skills are weaker. Actions to boost writing include staff training and the use of materials that really motivate pupils. These are proving successful with younger pupils and helping to raise attainment but have only been in place for a short time and have yet to fully impact on the attainment of the older pupils in Key Stage 2. In 2009 attainment in Key Stage 2 matched national averages at both the expected and higher levels. Strong focus on improving calculation skills has raised attainment in mathematics, but writing skills at a higher level are weaker. This attainment represents good progress for these pupils in relation to their starting points in Year 1.

Pupils report that the school takes good care of them. They are well aware of safety issues, including internet safety, know there is always someone to turn to for help and that bullying is not tolerated. Although a few pupil questionnaires said behaviour could be better, good and often exemplary behaviour was observed in lessons and assemblies. Pupils move around the buildings and playgrounds with care and consideration for others and, as one pupil remarked, 'Staff protect us around the building work.'

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are always polite, friendly and helpful to staff, visitors and their classmates, and show sincere empathy for others, for example, the homeless. They eagerly accept responsibilities in the school community as play leaders and councillors and make a strong contribution to

the local community, participating in the recent 'Save Bidston Hill' campaign and recycling paper. Year 6 pupils learn about economics and how fair trade supports communities globally when they acted as farmers trading cocoa beans. Otherwise, pupils' awareness of issues and lifestyles in the wider world is limited. Attendance is satisfactory. Robust efforts to raise attendance have proved successful; rewards and certificates are prominently displayed around school. Pupils are well prepared for the next steps in education and for their future as responsible citizens.

These are the grades for pupils'/children's outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Varied teaching styles, stimulating activities, well chosen resources and high expectations inspire pupils to work hard, enjoy learning and make good progress. Some examples of exemplary teaching were observed. Well chosen questions ensure pupils of all abilities participate fully in lessons. 'If we are stuck, teachers give us an example or different method to help us.' reported one pupil typical of others. Well-deployed teaching assistants bring additional skills in modelling language and posing additional questions. Good assessment systems give a very clear picture of progress and provide valuable information to plan the next steps in learning. In some classes pupils often self-assess their work. They are very sure how to improve their work to reach their targets and say teachers' marking is helpful. However, activities do not always challenge pupils of different abilities, particularly the more able.

The balanced range of imaginative curriculum activities is carefully adapted to meet and support the needs of every pupil and includes a good personal development programme. Subjects are often linked through themes, and innovative use of information and communication technology, for example, film making, successfully develops and extends key skills in all subjects. Consequently, pupils show high levels of enjoyment in all activities. Enrichment is very strong and the school makes full use of its excellent partnerships to provide experiences pupils would not otherwise meet. Older pupils learn French or Spanish. There are frequent visits and visitors and many opportunities for pupils to sing or learn a musical instrument; the school throbbed as pupils in Years 3 and 4 practised Japanese drumming.

Parents and pupils have great confidence in the school's exemplary care, guidance and support arrangements. Governors are particularly active in ensuring safeguarding procedures are followed meticulously and have been rigorous in overseeing site safety during the construction work. Close links between school, parents and all external agencies ensure high quality, sensitive support for pupils who face difficulties that make it hard for them to learn or take advantage of the opportunities offered by the school. Pupils reflect on the impact of their actions on others and parents say they are well prepared to move to the next stage of their education, from pre-school through to high school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Robust monitoring and evaluation ensure senior leaders know exactly how the school is performing, ensures all pupils experience consistently good teaching and enables them to set ambitious and demanding targets. Governance is good, with strong features in their active involvement, systems to quality assure the school's work and in the way they challenge leaders. Parents appreciate the family learning workshops that help them support their child, they feel well informed and know their views and concerns are respected. Excellent partnerships enrich the curriculum and enhance the high quality care, for example, with the local Children's Centre. The school takes the lead in sharing best practice with other settings, such as implementing and updating assessment systems. Good arrangements, including high quality additional support, ensure all pupils have equal opportunities to everything the school offers and progress well. Staff are vigilant and consistently implement good safeguarding procedures that ensure pupils' safety and well-being. The harmonious school ethos is based on good community cohesion arrangements, enhanced through extensive local links and partnerships although evaluation of the impact of the school's actions shows that pupils have limited knowledge of other ways of life in the wider British society and the world.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

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

The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children enter school with skills below those typical for their age, and a significant proportion are weaker in language, communication and mathematical skills. A very caring ethos, warm, friendly relationships and strong, effective partnerships between staff and their parents ensure children feel confident, secure and safe. They gather quickly on the carpet each morning, eager to hear who will be given responsibilities that day. Behaviour is good and children soon learn to share, cooperate and play well together. They tidy up responsibly and show increasing independence when choosing activities. Daily practice with sounds and letters, for example, guessing games with the initial letters of their names, helps children progress rapidly, ready for reading and writing.

Good teaching provides an interesting range of learning activities, carefully balanced between those led by adults and those selected by the children. Staff are skilled in meeting the needs of each child, firmly based on careful observation of their progress and good knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. The rooms are bright, welcoming and appropriately equipped. However, plans do not always include activities outside and the outdoor area offers limited opportunities for children to extend their learning in the fresh air.

Leadership is good and ensures staff work closely together as a team with a real sense of purpose to improve and extend the learning experiences of each child. Consequently, the children make good progress in all areas of learning and most reach average levels of skills at the end of their time in the Reception classes, but are still weaker in writing.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

Responses in the questionnaire show very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the school's provision; parents and carers say their children enjoy school, are kept safe and that they are well informed about their progress. They showed great confidence in the staff and the leaders.

Inspection findings supported the positive views of parents but did not support the very few negative comments.

A concern was raised about the entrance gate to the infant playground which also provides access to the pre-school. The inspection found that the school has rigorous safety arrangements in place and the gate is staffed when pupils are outside.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bidston Avenue Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

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

The inspection team received 65 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 413 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	75	12	18	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	68	20	31	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	37	57	26	40	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	55	25	38	2	3	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	42	65	21	32	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	34	52	29	45	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	55	26	40	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	36	55	26	40	3	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	39	60	23	35	3	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	54	27	42	3	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	45	32	49	2	3	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	38	58	24	37	3	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	44	68	18	28	1	2	1	2

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

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

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

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

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

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>the following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.



12 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bidston Avenue Primary School, Birkenhead CH41 0DQ

I would like to thank you for making the team welcome when we inspected your school. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing what you thought about school. You told us you are happy and feel safe, enjoy learning and know how to care for your health, and your parents agree.

We were very impressed by the sensible way you behave around the school and were pleased to see you taking extra care while the building work was going on. We learned that you want to help in school and get involved with the local community, and take part in many sports and musical activities. We enjoyed hearing you singing and taking part in the Japanese drumming.

Bidston Avenue is a good school and the leaders and staff take excellent care of you all. They make sure you start well in the Reception classes and make good progress through school to reach the right standards for your age. They give you lots of interesting things to do in lessons and at the clubs, which you told us you enjoy very much. You also told us that you know what learning targets you are aiming for.

I have asked the leaders to:

- make sure teachers plan work that challenges more of you to reach higher levels in writing
- help you learn more about the wider world.

We know you are excited to have the new building and we hope this will add to your enjoyment of everything you do at school.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Kathleen McArthur
Lead inspector

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