

Black Horse Hill Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105032
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	336405
Inspection dates	18–19 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Mrs Judith Straw

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sandra Crowden
Headteacher	Mr Harry Kennedy
Date of previous school inspection	October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 17 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, and parents and carers. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' work across a range of subjects, school policies and procedures, including all documentation relating to safeguarding, curriculum planning, the school's development plan, tracking information about the progress of pupils, and questionnaires from 86 parents and carers, 167 pupils and nine staff.

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

- how well all pupils are learning, progressing and achieving their potential
- whether aspects of pupils' personal development are outstanding
- the accuracy of the school's evaluation of teaching, learning and the curriculum
- the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels in bringing about school improvement.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average junior school and is situated in an area of average prosperity. The great majority of pupils come from a White British background and very few are from other backgrounds. None speak English as a second language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is average. The proportion identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, although few pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

The school holds the Activemark, Healthy Schools award, the Bike-It Bronze award, the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the local authority accreditation for International School award.

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. As one parent put it, echoing the views of many, 'The school has constantly exceeded my expectations and shown itself to be wholeheartedly committed to the education of the children and the local community.'

Pupils make good progress because they are real partners in their learning. Teaching is good and pupils are encouraged to think for themselves, work independently of teachers and develop habits of research and investigation which are transferable across all areas of learning. An exciting, innovative and creative curriculum is being developed which enhances enjoyment and fires the imagination of pupils. The school takes very good care of pupils so that they feel safe, happy and confident. Some aspects of pupils' personal development are outstanding. These are their approach to healthy living, their contribution to the school and wider community and their knowledge and understanding of how to keep safe.

Pupils join Year 3 with attainment that is above average. When they leave in Year 6 standards are well above average in English and science and above average in mathematics. Inspection evidence confirmed the school's own assessment that the learning, progress and achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good across a range of subjects. Inspection evidence, as well as the school's own accurate and detailed tracking data, shows that pupils make slower progress in mathematics and this is currently a whole-school focus for improvement. Pupils do not always receive enough advice on how to improve their work in mathematics and sometimes there is not enough planning for the full range of ability in each class.

Leadership and management are good at all levels. Since the last inspection the quality of teaching and learning has improved, an innovative and creative curriculum has become firmly embedded and the quality of care, guidance and support has been enhanced. The school has an accurate knowledge of its strengths and areas where improvements can be made. This good track record combined with a strong and effective working partnership between teachers and parents and carers illustrates well that the school has good capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress and achievement in mathematics by:
 - further embedding strategies already in place to improve provision in mathematics
 - ensuring that work is better matched to the needs of the full range of pupils in each mathematics set
 - improving the quality and consistency of the feedback pupils receive through marking.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Teaching and learning are able to flourish because pupils want to learn. They enjoy coming to school where their attendance is above average. A comment, typical of many was, 'I love this school; it helps everyone to be creative.' Pupils say there is no bullying and that they feel completely safe and happy in school. They throw themselves wholeheartedly into the life of the school taking full advantage of the many enrichment activities on offer. Their contribution to their school and local community is outstanding. Many pupils take on roles and responsibilities in school such as being active playground leaders, serving on the school council or as class monitors, becoming house captains, road safety officers and joining the Bike-It crew. Two boys are 'Reading Champions' and work with the local library to encourage other boys to read regularly. The school council has been filmed by the local authority as an example to other schools of good practice. Pupils talk knowledgeably about the benefits of healthy eating and taking regular exercise. The school council is passionately committed to making the school even more health conscious than it is already. This is one of the first schools to achieve the Bike-It Award and pupils really enjoy the Bike-It breakfasts which are provided for those who cycle or walk to school.

Attitudes and behaviour are good in and out of lessons. Attainment in English is rising steadily but declining in mathematics. The school is developing strategies to address this issue, including involving parents and carers in their children's learning. The school's detailed tracking data shows that over half of all pupils in every class are making better than expected progress in the core subjects. In lessons, pupils are enthusiastic, keen to learn and work very well in partnership with their teachers and each other. Pupils develop strong academic skills and excellent social skills. They are keen to talk about their work and take pride in its presentation. Their books are a pleasure to read. Project work is extremely well presented and standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are high.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2

The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning are good across the school, although teachers are aware that pupils are making slower progress in mathematics than in other subjects. There is a whole-school focus on improving provision and standards in mathematics and teachers are currently trialling different ways of accelerating progress. The emphasis across the school is on developing key transferable skills through fascinating and creative topics such as the current project in Years 4 and 5, called 'fire and fury'. Teachers plan carefully so that many skills are developed. They are beginning to assess pupils' progress across a range of subjects such as history, geography and ICT. Teachers make lessons exciting, challenging and fun. For example, during the inspection, Year 3 were making pizzas as part of their work on Italy and Year 6 were improvising scenes from Macbeth. Teaching assistants support teachers well and play a very positive part in children's learning. Pupils participate fully in reviewing their own and others' work. However, marking comments, particularly in mathematics, do not always ensure that pupils know how to improve their work.

The curriculum is broad, balanced and designed to meet the needs of pupils. School leaders have worked hard to develop the curriculum since the last inspection and to inject excitement, enthusiasm, an investigative approach and a love of learning into the work that pupils do. There is an emphasis on problem solving and many opportunities are provided for pupils to develop team-working skills, enterprise skills, skills in handling money, and gardening and ICT skills. The cross-curricular themes, such as 'roman holiday', 'tomb raiders' and 'working children', broaden pupils' horizons as do the numerous visits pupils make, such as to Roman Chester, and the whole-school Victorian and Tudor days. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is provided, including different sporting clubs every afternoon, chess and Chinese, and the take-up is strong.

The care, guidance and support to promote the welfare of all pupils is good. Transition arrangements into the school from the infant school and on to secondary school at the end of Year 6 are smooth and comfortable for pupils. Pastoral care is strong because teachers and other adults take time to listen to children and get to know them well. Very effective strategies support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that they are quickly diagnosed and the right level of support is available to ensure that they make good progress. Pupils have the opportunity to develop into capable, confident, independent and caring individuals. The school is working to improve further the links with other schools and to ensure that progress is consistent across all subjects.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The direction and purpose given to the school by the headteacher and the deputy headteacher are outstanding. There is a strong sense of teamwork in the school, based on mutual support. Improvements have been made by consulting staff and parents and carers so that everyone feels valued and willing to put new ideas into practice, for example with the new creative curriculum and the new parents council. Governors, teachers, managers and leaders all support each other well. Together, they have succeeded in ensuring that the school has improved significantly over the last few years. The school knows itself well and is keen to improve further. Community cohesion is good. There are excellent links with the local community, including the local church, and good international links with a local secondary school and three primary schools in South Africa.

The school has good procedures for promoting equal opportunity. All pupils in the school are able to enjoy all that the school offers. There are good systems in place at all levels for monitoring the quality of the school's work and it has an honest and accurate picture of strengths and weaker areas. The school development plan identifies priorities and clearly sets out how they are to be addressed. Safeguarding arrangements and matters relating to child protection and health and safety are handled well and provision is good. The school works well with external agencies. Parents and carers are consulted and engaged at all levels and their suggestions are acted on if considered to be in the best interests of all concerned. Governors play an active, supportive and critical role and are very well informed about the school.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

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

Views of parents and carers

The great majority of parents and carers are very pleased and praise many aspects of the schools' work. They are impressed by the commitment of the headteacher and staff, the good behaviour and discipline which is maintained, the exciting and challenging curriculum and the care taken of their children, with one parent stating, 'Pastoral care is exceptional.' Parents and carers also appreciate the efforts made by the school to empower them to help their children. They are confident that the school has improved over recent years. Representatives of the newly formed parent council spoke of their desire to act as a channel of communication so that all concerns raised by parents and carers can be explored and, if possible, addressed. The minority of parents and carers who expressed negative comments were concerned about the large class sizes in Years 4 and 5. It is the case that these are large classes but inspectors noted that teachers manage them well and that most pupils make good progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Black Horse Hill Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

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

The inspector received 86 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 180 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	54	61	31	35	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	68	77	18	20	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	49	56	37	42	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	51	38	43	4	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	49	56	35	40	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	45	51	40	45	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	46	52	40	45	1	1	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)	44	50	39	44	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	45	51	35	40	3	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	43	49	37	42	4	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	44	42	48	3	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	52	59	35	40	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	56	64	30	34	1	1	0	0

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

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
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.



20 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Black Horse Hill Junior School, Wirral, CH48 6DR

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome when we visited you in school this week. It was a privilege to spend two days with you. We thoroughly enjoyed hearing your views about school. It is obvious that you really enjoy school and we agree with you and your parents and carers that yours is a good school.

We were very impressed by your knowledge and understanding of how to live safe and healthy lives and with the great way you all contribute to your school community. It is obvious you are very proud of your school. We noted your good behaviour and positive attitude in lessons. This is why you make good progress and attain standards which are above average, and well above average in English and science. Teaching and learning are good and you clearly enjoy lessons. You told us that you love 'context for learning' work where you look at an amazing range of different topics and become investigators and designers. The school takes good care of you and you feel safe at all times. The leaders and managers in school work well with your parents and carers to try to make sure you get the most you can out of school life.

There is one area where you are not learning quite as well and that is in mathematics. Teachers have already noticed this and are planning to help you to make better progress in mathematics. We have asked them to plan for the different abilities you have and make sure that when your work is marked you know exactly what you need to do to improve it.

We wish you all the best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Judith Straw
On behalf of the inspection team.

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