

Barnston Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105030
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	363688
Inspection dates	11–12 April 2011
Reporting inspector	Judith Tolley

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	270
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Derrick
Headteacher	Jill Pearson
Date of previous school inspection	08 July 2008
School address	Sandham Grove Heswall Wirral CH60 1XW
Telephone number	0151 342 5229
Fax number	0151 342 9598
Email address	schooloffice@barnston.wirral.sch.uk

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St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 4234
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 17 lessons and saw 11 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the school's analysis of pupils' progress and improvement plans. They analysed 146 pupil questionnaires and 107 from parents and carers.

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

- Whether there is sufficient evidence that most pupils make good progress across the school, leading to outstanding achievement.
- How successfully the school is working to 'narrow the gaps' and raise attainment in mathematics and English.
- Whether middle leaders are developing their role sufficiently well to embed ambition and drive improvement in their subject areas.

Information about the school

Barnston Primary School is larger than average. Pupils are of predominantly White British heritage. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average overall. The headteacher has been in post for two years and there have been significant changes in staff since the last inspection. The school has achieved a number of awards including Healthy School status, Basic Skills Quality Mark and Activemark. 'Barnston Buddies' nursery shares the school's site but is not run by the school's governing body. It is inspected separately.

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. Attainment is high and pupils' achievement is outstanding. By the end of Year 6 attainment in English and mathematics is high and pupils have made good progress from their starting points. This comes about from good teaching and a curriculum which meets their needs and interests well. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same good progress as their classmates as a result of the very effective support they receive in lessons. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their enthusiastic response in lessons, their good behaviour and their high levels of attendance.

Pupils' personal development and their contribution to the school and wider community are good. They very willingly take on responsibility and are fully involved in school decision-making through, for instance, the school council and as playground leaders and peer mentors. Frequent opportunities to work together to solve problems and to explain their ideas to one another prepare them well for the next stage in their education. Pupils are given good guidance about how to improve their work in English but this is not always the case in other subjects. Similarly, assessment information is not always used as effectively as it might be in teachers' planning to meet the needs of all pupils in lessons.

Parents and carers value the good care, guidance and support the school provides for its pupils and the good partnerships the school has with them, which support their children's learning well. Although the school meets government guidelines for safeguarding and the safe recruitment of staff, there is scope to strengthen the quality assurance of safeguarding arrangements so that it is equally rigorous in all areas of the school's work.

The headteacher provides very clear direction, based on the close monitoring of pupils' progress and an accurate evaluation of the school's work. She has led the school strongly during a period of significant changes in staffing and, in the relatively short time she has been in post, has acted decisively to raise attainment in English and mathematics. The introduction of a topic-based curriculum is proving very effective in eliminating differences in the attainment of different groups in English and in engaging pupils' interest through imaginative activities. However there is still scope to increase opportunities for pupils to practise the basic skills of literacy numeracy and information communication technology (ICT) across the whole timetable in order to accelerate progress further. Strategies to improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning and to raise attainment in English and mathematics have also been instrumental in developing teamwork, which is now a

good characteristic of the school. Although subject leaders are still developing their roles, they share the headteacher's vision and drive improvement well. Since the last inspection both attainment and attendance have improved and are now high. This record of improvement provides a clear indication of the school's good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning further by:
 - improving the use of assessment information in planning to meet better the needs of all groups of learners in lessons
 - providing pupils with precise information about improving their work across all subjects
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to practise their basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information communication technology more widely across the curriculum
 - strengthening the systems of quality assurance in order to bring about a greater rigour in safeguarding systems and procedures across the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Many children start school with skills, knowledge and understanding above those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and join Year 1 as confident learners, with skills that are securely above-average and ready to access the Key Stage 1 curriculum. They continue to make good progress so that attainment by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science is high and their achievement outstanding. When given the opportunity to work collaboratively in pairs and small groups to solve problems, pupils are keen to participate and organise themselves well. In an English lesson, for instance, Years 1 and 2 pupils worked enthusiastically in pairs to plan what they should include in a letter to warn other classes about a character who was likely to disrupt their 'medieval banquet'. Similarly Years 3 and 4 pupils organised themselves well to work out how to record coordinates in a mathematics lesson.

Pupils talk enthusiastically about their lessons and are proud of their achievements. They feel safe at school and know who they can talk to if they have any problems. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and demonstrate their commitment to healthy lifestyles through participation in sporting extra-curricular activities and healthy choices of food at lunchtime and break. They clearly enjoy the opportunities they have to help others and they take their responsibilities seriously, for instance as play leaders, mentors for younger pupils, and as members of the school council. They have good relationships with each other and their teachers and have a good sense of right and wrong. They take time to reflect on their own actions and regularly help one another in class and around the school. They have a good understanding of other cultures but their knowledge of the diversity of cultures within the United Kingdom is less secure.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
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 ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers usually present new ideas clearly and use a good variety of resources and topics to engage pupils' interest. They use questioning to good effect to support and challenge pupils well both in whole-class discussions and during class work. Pupils make the best progress when they are given the opportunity to work with a partner or in small groups to solve problems and complete tasks or act as 'envoys' or 'magpies' to learn from others. As a result they are confident and articulate in expressing their ideas. Assessment information is usually used effectively to provide an appropriate level of challenge and progress is monitored closely by teachers during tasks. Teaching assistants use their expertise very skilfully in supporting individuals and small groups. However, resources do not always provide sufficient support to enable those working independently of the teacher in lessons to achieve their full potential. Pupils are beginning to evaluate their own and each other's work but are not always sure about how they are getting on. Opportunities are sometimes missed in plenary discussions to enable pupils to identify how exactly they can improve their work.

The curriculum meets pupils' needs and interests well. The themed curriculum, although at the early stages of development, engages pupils' interest and is providing opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in a variety of imaginative contexts. Its impact upon pupils' progress in English is already clear. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 were enthusiastic in discussing their conclusions about life in Tudor England and the ethics of importing clothes from the Third World as a result of their experience of weaving, for instance. Pupils use ICT to extend their learning, for research or to develop their skills. Their experience is further enriched by a variety of visitors, visits and extra-curricular activities. These are popular and well-attended. Pupils also benefit from specialist teaching in French, Spanish and physical education. They also participate enthusiastically in a variety of activities such as the 'Eggstravaganza' art project before Easter, as well as in school productions.

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

Good care, guidance and support for individuals results in an orderly and harmonious community. Each pupil's progress is reviewed regularly and this triggers prompt extra support where necessary. Well-thought-out induction procedures and close links with pre-school settings help children settle quickly when they join the school. Similarly, links with the high school ensure pupils feel confident when they move on to the next stage in their education. The school works very effectively with a range of external agencies, as well as parents and carers, to remove barriers to learning for pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's thorough analysis of the school's performance and the very clear direction for development that she has set are effective in helping to raise attainment. She is well-supported by the senior leadership team. The school provides an atmosphere where achievement is valued and celebrated. Close and accurate tracking of pupils' progress informs school improvement planning well. Teachers have begun to work in teams to plan lessons. This is effective in spreading good practice and results in a good level of consistency across year groups. Subject leaders are fully involved in planning the new curriculum and in tracking pupils' progress but are developing their roles to play a fuller part in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in their subjects.

The governing body is very supportive, increasingly involved in school activities and is developing its capacity to challenge the school. The school's focus on the needs of individuals demonstrates its strong commitment to promoting equality of opportunity. Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory and activities designed to improve children's understanding of how to stay safe are part of the curriculum. However, although routine checks are carried out they are not always recorded accurately. Workshops and meetings enable parents and carers to support their children's learning effectively. However, some parents and carers say they would like to be better informed about their children's progress and about events at the school. The school promotes community cohesion well both in the immediate area and through its links with schools in Cumbria and Africa which give pupils an insight into the diversity of cultures at home and abroad. The school provides good value for money.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2

The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

All children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress during their time in the Reception class. Behaviour is outstanding and children respond positively to adults, play well with their classmates and display clear enjoyment in their learning. Close liaison with pre-school settings and good relationships with parents and carers ensure children settle quickly and transition arrangements ensure they can settle quickly into Year 1. Children learn effectively through a good variety of stimulating adult-led and child-initiated activities. The outdoor play area has only recently been completed but children have already been preparing to use the gardening area by growing their own plants.

Teachers and teaching assistants monitor and record children's progress on a daily basis and this information is used effectively to record milestones and to plan next steps. Teachers and teaching assistants work very effectively as teams. They take every opportunity to engage in conversation with children and to encourage their independence, for instance, by completing routine tasks for themselves such as changing after physical education. Children respond very positively and show pride and pleasure in their achievements. Children are frequently required to describe what they have done, to explain not only what difficulties they found in completing tasks but also how they solved problems. As a result, by the time they enter Year 1, children are articulate and confident learners. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good and there is a high level of consistency between the two Reception classes. Good levels of care and welfare are provided for the children to ensure their well-being.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of the parents and carers who responded expressed positive views of the school. Parents and carers value highly the work of the school in helping their children to be happy. A very small minority expressed concern about the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. In discussion with inspectors pupils said they were confident that poor behaviour was dealt with promptly and effectively. On the whole, parents' and carers' views matched those of the inspectors.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Barnston 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 107 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 270 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	56	52	48	45	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	65	61	37	35	4	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	42	39	58	54	6	6	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	39	56	52	6	6	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	45	42	54	50	6	6	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	45	42	52	49	8	7	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	37	35	64	60	3	3	1	1
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)	34	32	59	55	7	7	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	37	35	63	59	4	4	3	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	33	59	55	9	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	35	63	59	4	4	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	47	44	53	50	4	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	52	49	48	45	4	4	1	1

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

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

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

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and is consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

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

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



13 April 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Barnston Primary School, Wirral, CH60 1XW

I would like to thank you on behalf of all the inspectors for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you all and hearing what you had to say. You told us how much you enjoy your learning and how proud you are of your school. We agree with you. You go to a good school. Your behaviour is good and we were very impressed by the way you helped us and each other during our visit. You told us that the staff look after you well and we agree, the care you receive is good. We noticed, for example, how well pupils are supported by teaching assistants in lessons but we also noticed that in some lessons some of you needed a bit more help when you completed work on your own. We have asked the school to try to make all the lessons as good as the best by ensuring you get the right amount of support.

Teachers make lessons interesting and this helps you to make good progress in your English and mathematics. We think you could make even better progress so we have asked the teachers to make sure you get more opportunities to practise your English, mathematics and information and communication technology skills in different subjects. Some of you told us that you were not always sure about how you are getting on. We noticed that the marking in English was very good and gave you very good ideas about how you are doing and precise guidance about how to improve. We have asked the teachers to make sure that marking for all your work is of the same high standard.

Younger children in the Reception class also make good progress and enjoy their learning. The headteacher and staff are working very hard to make your school even better. They keep you safe but we have asked them to keep better records of procedures they use to do this. I wish you every success for the future and hope that you continue to enjoy your learning.

Yours sincerely

Judith Tolley
Lead inspector

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