

Cathcart Street Primary School

Dover Close, Birkenhead, Merseyside, CH41 3JY

Inspection dates 4–5 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	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.

- From very low starting points pupils make good progress and reach standards which are broadly in line with those seen nationally.
- Teaching is improving. It is usually at least good and some is outstanding. As a consequence pupils enjoy their lessons, are eager to learn and are making increasingly rapid progress in their learning.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage provides a happy and secure setting. This enables the children to settle into school very well, gain confidence and independence, and make good progress in their first years in school.
- The school has excellent systems for the early identification of pupils experiencing learning difficulties. Carefully planned support is provided to help these pupils to learn well.
- Pupils feel safe and well cared for by the school. The school sets high expectations of behaviour, which are consistently applied. Consequently, pupils generally behave very well in lessons and learn quickly.
- The school is improving. Leaders and staff share high ambitions for it and its pupils. They track the progress of individual pupils rigorously and plan well to meet their needs.
- The school provides a rich curriculum which appeals to the interests of its pupils. It widens their experiences and caters very well for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Governance is good. Governors have detailed knowledge of the school, rigorously check on its performance and hold school leaders and teachers to account for their actions.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching does not yet result in pupils making outstanding progress.
- Pupils are not routinely given the opportunity to improve on their work and check on their own progress.
- The work set sometimes lacks challenge, particularly for the most able.
- Pupils are not always clear about the work they have to do or given sufficient time to complete it, in order to make good progress.
- School improvement targets set by school leaders are too broad and not easily measurable.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 16 lessons, including two joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition the inspectors made some short visits to classes and other parts of the school to observe behaviour and safety and also to hear some pupils read.
- A range of meetings was held with the headteacher. Inspectors also held meetings with senior leaders and middle managers, subject leaders, the school inclusion officer, staff, representatives of the governing body, a group of parents and two groups of pupils. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the school improvement partner. Inspectors also talked with pupils informally on the playground, as they came into school, around the school and during lessons.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a range of documents, including the school's own information about pupil progress; school improvement planning; the monitoring of learning and teacher performance; organisation of the curriculum; safeguarding information; and the minutes of governing body minutes. Inspectors also looked at the school's website.
- There were insufficient responses posted on the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) for them to be analysed, but inspectors looked at 40 response to the school's own survey of parents' views carried out in 2014 and also considered 20 responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Peter Martin, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christine Howard

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average sized primary school.
- The very large majority of pupils are White British. The proportions of pupils from ethnic minority groups or for whom English is an additional language are well below the national average.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action are well above the national average. The proportions supported at school action plus or with a statement of special needs are broadly in line with the national level.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is more than three times the national average. (The pupil premium is the additional funding provided by the government for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after.)
- The proportion of pupils joining the school at times other than at the beginning of the Early Year Foundation Stage is much higher than seen nationally.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding, so that more pupils make even faster progress by:
 - ensuring that teachers always provide pupils with challenging work so that pupils of all abilities, especially the most able, make more rapid progress and more pupils reach the higher levels of attainment
 - ensuring that pupils are clear about what they have been asked to do and are given sufficient time to complete it and make good progress
 - routinely providing pupils with time to respond to the good quality marking, to improve their work and to check for themselves how well they have achieved.
- Ensure that planned actions for school improvement have clear and measurable targets for pupils' achievement, so that leaders and governors are able to check the success of their actions more effectively.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- From very low starting points pupils make good progress. By the end of Year 6 their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly in line with national averages.
- Most children start in the Nursery with skills and knowledge which are well below those typical for their age, particularly their communication and language skills. They settle quickly, gain confidence and independence and make good progress in Nursery and Reception. Consequently, their skills are below, rather than well below, average when they join Year 1.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was well below the national average in 2013. However, in response to leaders' actions, such as additional staffing and effective changes to the curriculum, current pupils are now making rapid progress throughout the key stage.
- Year 6 pupils in 2013 made very good progress across the key stage. Attainment in Key Stage 2 has been improving over the last three years and is continuing to improve. Pupils' progress has been in line with national averages for the last two years. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels is increasing.
- The school's new scheme for teaching reading and writing is providing a more systematic approach to the teaching of phonics (linking letters to their sounds), which has had a very positive impact on pupils' reading and writing standards. Standards in the Year 1 phonics check have improved dramatically over the past two years. Pupils of all ages are reading more confidently and fluently than at the time of the previous inspection and they enjoy reading more widely at home and at school.
- Progress in mathematics is also accelerating. The school has reviewed its calculation policy and this has ensured a consistent approach to the teaching of the subject. Pupils now have more opportunities to apply their mathematical skills and work things out for themselves.
- The school is very effective at matching the work set for pupils at the lower levels, but less so for other ability groups, particularly the most able. Consequently they do not always make as much progress in lessons as they could. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels is increasing, but the work set for the most-able pupils does not always challenge them sufficiently.
- The school's management of its pupils' special educational needs is one of its real strengths. It has excellent systems for early assessment of pupil needs whenever they join the school. Close checking on pupils' progress and the planning of well-targeted additional support ensure that these pupils make good progress. One parent quoted her child's paediatrician as saying that 'the support provided in the school was second to none'.
- The majority of pupils in the school are supported through the pupil premium. This funding is used very effectively to provide additional teacher and teaching assistant support, and to ensure that these pupils can access all the opportunities the school offers. Consequently, they are doing better than similar pupils nationally and the achievement gap between them and other pupils in the school is closing rapidly. In 2013 pupils entitled to free school meals attained as well as their peers to reach standards broadly in line with the national average. This confirms the school's effective promotion of equality of opportunity.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is usually good and sometimes outstanding. It is improving because school leaders and staff are constantly seeking to improve it and raise pupil standards. The work in pupils' books confirms that teaching is at least good over time.
- Consistently well-planned lessons make learning interesting and fun for pupils. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons and that their teachers help them when they are stuck. Teachers display good subject knowledge and use questioning very skilfully to check constantly on pupils' understanding, develop their thinking further and help them work things out for themselves.
- The work in most classes is set at the right level to match the different ability groups,

particularly those who find learning more difficult. Occasionally, the work set for pupils, particularly the most able, does not challenge them as effectively as it could, because it is either too easy or too hard. This inhibits their rate of progress.

- Most teachers set high expectations of pupils' work, the completion of tasks and how they present their work and, consequently, pupils learn quickly. However, this is still not consistent in every class. Occasionally, pupils are not sure of what they are required to do or are given insufficient time to complete the work set. When this happens, the pupils do not make as much progress as they could.
- High quality marking throughout the school tells pupils what they have achieved and gives them guidance on how they can improve further. However, teachers do not routinely give pupils the opportunity to respond to the marking and make improvements to their work. In only a few classes are pupils given the opportunity to evaluate their own work to deepen their understanding of what they have learnt and to take more responsibility for their own learning.
- Pupils have targets for their work and teachers check and track their progress regularly to identify any pupil who may be falling behind. Teachers then modify their planning to plug any gaps in pupils' learning.
- The teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and has improved much since the last inspection. The Early Years team has worked hard to provide a vibrant, exciting and secure setting where children feel happy and valued, can develop their confidence and independence, and explore and learn things for themselves.
- Timely interventions from adults provide challenge, and guidance in their thinking and understanding. Well thought out routines, and a good balance between choice and focused learning ensures that the children thrive and, make good progress.
- The teaching of phonics is a particular strength in the school. Lively well planned sessions, with strong links to develop writing skills, generate enthusiasm and excitement in the pupils and they learn quickly. This is having a positive impact on pupils' reading and writing throughout the school.
- Teaching assistants have been very well trained are highly skilful in working with small groups and supporting pupils in class. They are a strength of the school and make a big contribution to the progress pupils make in their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils in the school is good. They are polite, friendly and eager to please. All adults provide good role models and there is a caring, nurturing atmosphere in the school.
- The school sets clear expectations for behaviour which are fully understood by the pupils and are consistently applied. Pupils are expected to take responsibility for their own actions and are encouraged to care for each other. Most do so, most of the time.
- The school council is very active in things like fund-raising and members of the Eco-council have been highly commended by the local authority's Healthy School Panel for their behaviour and contribution to their meetings.
- Relationships in classes are excellent. Teachers use lots of praise to encourage pupils to make contributions and try their best. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers and follow instructions. Consequently, most lessons run smoothly with little disruption, and pupils learn quickly. Occasionally, pupils are not clear about what they are required to do, which causes some pupils to lose focus and make less progress.
- Parents, staff and pupils agree that behaviour is generally good. All acknowledge that there is a minority of pupils that present challenging behaviour. The school has excellent systems to manage any incidents of such behaviour firmly and sensitively, with minimal disruption to the learning of all pupils.
- Pupils say they feel safe and well cared-for, that there is little bullying in the school and that it is mostly 'falling-out'. They have a clear understanding of the different forms bullying can take, including cyber-bullying. They say that, when it occurs, their teachers always take it seriously

and deal with it quickly and effectively.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. A highly effective team ensures that pupils whose circumstances make them likely to be vulnerable receive the support they need to ensure that they have access to all that the school can provide to help them develop as learners.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe because the school actively promotes personal safety through a range of activities such as Stranger Danger, road safety lessons and 'Bikeability', as well as warnings of the dangers of Internet use.
- In response to the school's effective actions, attendance is improving and close to the national average.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders provide a strong direction for school improvement. They have a clear picture of where the school is, where they want it to go, and how to get it there. They are very well supported by all the staff who share the same deep desire to drive up standards.
- A strong and sustained focus on the quality of teaching, backed up with well-targeted additional training and support for teachers, has resulted in teaching being consistently good and improving. Teachers are held to account for the quality of their teaching and pay progression is linked to their performance.
- The school checks on pupils' progress regularly with half-termly analysis of the progress of different groups. Leaders use this and the end of key stage data accurately to judge the school's performance and to set new priorities for improvement.
- The comprehensive school improvement plan includes well-thought-out priorities and actions. However, the targets set out to meet these priorities are too broad and do not make clear enough how the intended impact on pupils' achievement will be measured. This makes it difficult for leaders and governors to review how successful their actions have been in achieving the intended goals.
- Subject leaders are well trained and effective. They rigorously monitor standards using a range of methods, including checks of teachers' planning, work in pupils' books and observation of teaching.
- The exciting curriculum enables pupils to make good progress. It is enriched with visits and visitors that make it appealing and relevant to the pupils. Strong links to a school in China enable pupils to appreciate and admire cultures other than their own.
- The additional sport funding is used very effectively to provide additional opportunities for the pupils to experience a wide range of sports, training for staff by sports specialists and to employ a play leader who is enhancing the pupils' social time. This is making an excellent contribution to pupils' health and well-being.
- The school's contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. It encourages its pupils to be reflective individuals, develop curiosity in their learning and ensures that they become thoughtful, responsible individuals who have an appreciation of art and music and a respect for other people's opinions and beliefs.
- The school works very hard to engage parents. Parents say that communications are good and the staff are very approachable. The inclusion officer provides a wide range of workshops for parents that are increasingly well attended. She also works very effectively with pupils and families facing difficulties, improving and providing emotional support for pupils in school when needed.
- The local authority and the school improvement partner brokered by the authority, provide light touch, but well-targeted support for the school with access to additional training when requested by the school. It has been very effective, for example, in supporting the new Early Years Foundation Stage team.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. The governing body is highly committed to the school and very well-informed. Its members rigorously check on school performance and pupil progress using a

range of evidence. A robust system for checking on teacher performance linked to pay progression is in place. The effective use, and the impact on pupil achievement and well-being, of the additional funding for pupil premium and sport funding is scrutinised regularly by the governing body. It has a sound grip on the finances of the school and fulfils all its statutory functions, including those for safeguarding. It is very supportive of the work of the school while holding it to account for its performance.

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	105048
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	442334

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	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Massingham
Headteacher	Rosemarie Bishop
Date of previous school inspection	29 January 2013
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