

Bidston Avenue Primary School

Tollemache Road, Birkenhead, Merseyside, CH41 0DQ

Inspection dates 1–2 October 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- From their starting points, all groups of pupils make at least good progress in their learning, including in the early years.
- Pupils leave the school in Year 6 with standards in English and mathematics that are broadly average.
- The headteacher has high expectations and is very driven to move the school forward. As a result, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement continue to improve.
- Specialist support for disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and for disadvantaged pupils is a strength of the school. This helps these pupils to do as well as their peers.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teaching is strong in its impact on pupils' achievement over time.
- Pupils behave well. They are polite and respectful and feel safe in school. The care, guidance and support for all pupils are strong and they feel valued.
- Highly effective use is made of information and communication technology in lessons to enhance learning and is a strength of the school.
- The primary school sport funding and funding for disadvantaged pupils are spent very well, enabling pupils to try exciting activities for the first time. For example, on residential trips pupils say, 'We are learning skills that we have never had like rock-climbing and canoeing.' Governors, especially the Chair, have determination to ensure all pupils are taught well and receive a good education. They are regular visitors to the school and check the actions taken by leaders to raise the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. As a result, the school is well placed to continue to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent; subject leaders do not always pick up on this when they review the quality of teaching.
- Teaching does not always stretch pupils to achieve their best in writing. The most able pupils do not always move on to harder work quickly enough.
- Learning activities outdoors linked to creativity and literacy in the early years are not as well developed as the other areas of learning to support writing skills and creative development, particularly for boys.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons, three of which were support groups.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and reviewed the work in their books.
- Inspectors held formal and informal discussions with pupils to talk about their experience of school, and particularly their learning, behaviour and safety. Discussions were also held with the senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors reviewed a number of school documents. These included information about pupils' progress, school improvement plans and records of governors' meetings. Records relating to the quality of teaching, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body and four other members about pupils' achievement and governors' involvement in the school, such as analysing data and observing teaching in support groups. An inspector also spoke to a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 49 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). An inspector spoke to parents as they dropped children off at school in the morning. Inspectors also considered responses from 14 staff to the inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Emily Wheeldon, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Chris Maloney	Additional Inspector
Peter Martin	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Bidston Avenue Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The very large majority of pupils are White British. A few are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with a few who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported through school action is well above the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium is twice the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Since the last inspection, the junior and infant buildings have been joined together to create one school building.
- There have been significant changes in staff since the last inspection.
- The school has strong links with Orrets Meadow, which is a community special school for pupils of primary-school age with dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties.
- The headteacher is Chair of the Birkenhead North Cluster of Schools and Chair of Wirral City Learning Centre Board.
- The school is very involved in the Research and Development strand of the Weatherhead Teaching School Alliance.
- The school holds many externally validated awards, including Basic Skills Quality Mark, Eco-School Green Flag, PE and Sport Bronze Kitemark and RHS Levels 1 and 2.
- The Bidston Avenue Pre-School operates on the same site and is run privately. It is subject to a separate inspection from Ofsted and reports for this setting may be viewed at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding and so accelerate pupils' achievement over time, particularly in writing, by:
 - ensuring teachers plan tasks in all subjects that stretch the abilities of all pupils, particularly the most able, and so move them forward still faster in their learning
 - ensuring that the good practice that exists in marking within the school is consistently applied by all teachers so that pupils know how to improve their work and do this regularly.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring middle leaders consistently check the impact of actions they are taking to improve still further the quality of teaching and achievement
 - improving further the quality of learning in the early years by providing more planned and unplanned activities in the outdoor area, particularly for boys, to develop children's writing skills and creative development.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders have identified the key areas that require further improvement. The changes in staffing have been managed well and new teachers have been integrated well into school. Weaker teaching has been eradicated, staff have been on effective training courses, and discussions about what needs to be done have been effective in raising pupils' attainment. As a result, achievement over time has improved and pupils make good progress.
- The headteacher is very committed and driven to push the school to be outstanding. His energy and enthusiasm have a positive impact on pupils and staff. Extremely positive views from staff sum this up well by saying, 'A well-led school with a fantastic hardworking team. It is a pleasure to work here.'
- Middle leaders are dedicated to their work. They have a good subject knowledge and support staff well. However, at times, middle leaders do not check sufficiently well on the impact of their efforts to improve teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The school has made good progress towards implementing a new and very memorable curriculum and pupils benefit from a wide variety of learning experiences. These include visits to Jodrell Bank and the Manchester Velodrome, and opportunities to engage in World Book Day. Pupils also enjoy participating in various specialist music activities including recorder and violin teaching for all Years 2 and 4 pupils. The upper year groups experience exciting activities away from school, such as staying at Oaklands in North Wales for an outdoor and adventurous activity. Year 6 pupils travel by Eurostar to northern France to visit the Somme battlefields, as part of their work on the First World War. They also use their French language skills in Paris.
- British values are well embedded in the curriculum and linked to the school's own agreed values. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well, for example, through the belief in mutual respect and tolerance and through the expressive arts. The impact is seen in pupils' understanding of clearly defined boundaries of what is right or wrong as they move through the school. These values contribute strongly to pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to learning. Artwork is particularly strong and this is reflected clearly in the elaborate displays in the corridors and classrooms.
- Excellent partnerships with local schools enable staff to share practice and observe outstanding teaching and learning. The school is a strategic partner in the Weatherhead Teaching School Alliance and is the lead school for research and development. Excellent links with Orrets Meadow have improved the quality of support for pupils with learning difficulties and so raised their achievement.
- There are strong relationships with parents, who are highly supportive of the school. For example, they say, 'We feel well informed about our children's progress and the school works hard to engage with us and we feel very much part of the school.'
- The school has links with the local authority. However, due to its status of being consistently 'good' since its previous inspection, support has not been required.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is led by a very enthusiastic Chair. Governors are regular visitors to the school and know exactly what needs to be done to raise achievement further. They have attended training to increase their understanding of school data and regularly challenge the headteacher and staff to see whether actions are working.
 - Governors keep a close eye on how funding is used to support disadvantaged pupils to check money is spent effectively and is making a difference. They are fully committed to promoting equality and tackling discrimination of any kind. Senior leaders and governors ask pupils how the funding has improved their lives. Pupils talk about their trip to France and say, 'We spoke in French to a French lady and she understood us!'
 - The primary school sport funding is spent extremely well on sports provision, both curricular and extra-curricular. Very effective use has been made of the funding because it has widened opportunities for pupils and raised staff expertise. This has led to a significant increase in pupils' participation and has contributed well to their health and emotional well-being.
 - Governors ensure that teachers' pay is clearly linked to the impact of their teaching on pupils' progress.
 - Governors ensure that safeguarding meets requirements. Safeguarding is checked to ensure that pupils are as safe as possible and that policies and procedures are up to date.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well and are polite and friendly around the school. For example, they open doors for visitors and are respectful to adults, including visitors, when spoken to. They are keen to talk about their work and the range of extra-curricular activities they enjoy, both during and after school.
- Behaviour at lunchtimes is consistently good and sometimes exemplary. For example, children in the early years and in Key Stage 1 collect their dinners in an orderly way and take care of their own needs. Pupils in Key Stage 2 enter the hall for assembly in a quiet, orderly manner and are attentive throughout the assembly. Pupils take pride in their appearance and look smart in their uniform.
- Pupils know what the school rules are and the consequences if they break a rule. The behaviour policy has a positive effect on pupils' behaviour, which is good, especially in class. Pupils say they look forward to receiving green cards for good behaviour.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils have a good knowledge about how to keep themselves safe, especially when they use the internet. They know, for example, that they must never share personal details about where they live and they say, 'You must never share your password.' Bullying is rare and pupils say that staff listen closely to them and make sure they are happy.
- The majority of parents say that their children are safe and well cared for in school. They state that staff are approachable and respond to concerns well. They rate behaviour as very good. Staff skilfully manage and support pupils whose needs are complex or whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. The excellent partnerships with professional agencies beyond school contribute well to supporting these pupils and their families. As a result, pupils have a positive attitude to learning and confidently join in a wide range of school activities with the rest of their peers.
- Staff generally supervise pupils well outside lesson time, such as when they are walking to the dinner hall and playing outside. Pupils know that they must not run in corridors and that they must stay within the parameters of the playground.
- Pupils' attendance was below the national average in 2012 and 2013. The headteacher is well aware of this and has made a concerted effort to tackle absence, including persistent absence, by making telephone calls, sending texts to parents and holding panel meetings. As a result, overall absence and persistent absence have reduced to below the national average.

The quality of teaching is good

- Very good relationships between staff and pupils are a common feature in all lessons. Pupils feel special and valued and want to try their best because they know their teachers take a keen interest in them and value their efforts and hard work.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and skilfully use questions to test and extend pupils' knowledge and skills. Teachers ensure pupils' own targets are linked to their work so that they can assess whether pupils have understood concepts well or need further support.
- Highly effective use is made of information and communication technology in lessons to enhance learning and engage pupils. In Year 2, for instance, pupils really enjoy reading texts on their laptops and are able to put sentences in the right order by dragging sections of text across the screen. The school has excellent provision, including the use of a specialist teacher for computing, and this has a very positive impact on the knowledge and skills of pupils across the school. The school leads the way in the teaching of computer programming and blogging and has shared its work nationally, as well as locally. Pupils make good progress in reading and writing. A contributing factor is that pupils regularly practise new strategies to blend sounds to make words. In guided reading sessions, pupils extend their vocabulary skills well. In Year 6, pupils show initiative, are self-motivated and set themselves additional tasks to extend their learning further.
- The level of challenge for the most able is not high enough to enable them to achieve to the best of their abilities, especially in writing in Key Stages 1 and 2. At times, the most able pupils do not get down to harder work quickly or they spend time on tasks that are too easy for them. Although some written feedback in books from teachers is effective in telling pupils how to improve their work, this is inconsistent across the school. Furthermore, pupils do not regularly respond to suggestions before moving on to

different work.

- Specialist support for disadvantaged pupils is a strength of the school. Staff check the progress pupils make to see if the work they are doing to support pupils is effective. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and work is carefully tailored to match their abilities.
- Due to the skilled use of support from outside agencies and other school staff, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. For example, targeted support is given by an experienced teaching assistant trained and supervised by Orrets Meadow Outreach for pupils with specific learning difficulties. Pupils show they have the confidence to work things out because they can understand and follow the chunks of information they receive in small developmental steps.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well through Years 1 to 6 from their various starting points, and reach broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. As previous cohorts started Year 1 with below-average skills, this represents good progress for these pupils.
- In 2013 and 2014, in the Year 2 national tests, standards were consistently above average in reading, writing and mathematics. This also represents good progress from pupils' starting points and provides a strong foundation for pupils' learning in Key Stage 2.
- Pupils' love of mathematics is developed well and their basic numeracy skills are carefully reinforced. There are effective programmes to support the less able pupils so they do well too.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. Discrete sessions to support pupils' knowledge about letter sounds and how to sound out difficult words are helping pupils to learn to read. The effective teaching in the early years and in Key Stage 1 supports good progress, as reflected in the high numbers of pupils who achieved the expected standards in the Year 1 phonics check for the last two years. Pupils enjoy reading at school and at home on a regular basis.
- The proportion of the most able pupils working at the higher levels is not increasing as fast as it should. Too few pupils gain the higher Level 5 in reading, writing and mathematics because the work they undertake is not challenging enough. Coupled with this, in writing, pupils do not practise or extend their writing skills sufficiently in other subjects.
- The effective deployment of teaching assistants and individual support for disadvantaged pupils has been successful in ensuring that gaps in attainment continue to close. In mathematics, in 2013, disadvantaged pupils outperformed their peers in school by approximately half a term. In 2014, they continued this pattern. In 2013, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils was nearly a term behind that of their peers in school in reading and two and a half terms behind in writing. In 2014, this picture improved and the gap continued to narrow. When compared to the attainment of other pupils nationally in 2013, attainment for disadvantaged pupils in school widened slightly to two terms in writing, narrowed to less than one term in reading and closed completely in mathematics.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. Their progress in reading, writing and mathematics is similar to, and often better than, that of similar pupils nationally. Evidence shows this is due to well-targeted support. This good progress confirms the effectiveness of the school's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity.

The early years provision

is good

- Children start school in the early years with skills that are lower, and for some, significantly lower, than is typical for their age, especially in their communication and language skills and personal, social and emotional development. Children, including those who are disabled or with special educational needs and the most able, make good and sometimes outstanding progress from their different starting points. This means they are now well prepared for learning in Year 1 with 55% reaching a good level of development in 2014, although this has not always been the case for previous cohorts. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has increased significantly over the last two years.
- Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Staff are caring and want children to be happy and have fun as they learn.
- Activities to teach children about letters of the alphabet and the sounds they make are taught in exciting ways. For example, children enjoy naming the letters they see on metal tins when they are knocked over with a ball. As a result, children develop a good foundation for their early literacy skills.

- Staff have high expectations and a good knowledge of the individual needs and interests of children. Observations and planning are effective and assessments accurately identify any gaps in individuals' learning so support is put in place swiftly.
- Staff know how young children learn and are trained to deliver specific assessments which identify early any child with communication and language difficulties. As a result, children receive help swiftly and are able to catch up with their peers. Partnerships with outside agencies, particularly with speech therapists, are strong.
- Partnerships with parents are good because they are very involved in their children's learning and are invited to go on courses to develop their parenting skills. Parents contribute to children's records and are kept informed about their children's progress on a regular basis.
- The early years leader is an experienced practitioner with a secure knowledge about the learning and development and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. She has managed well the significant changes to staffing, and staff feel supported and part of a team.
- Children settle into school quickly and move into Year 1 with ease. This is because transition arrangements are organised carefully and information about individual children is shared well between parents, teachers in the school, outside agencies and staff from local nurseries in the area.
- Standards continue to rise in the early years but the outdoor area does not effectively stimulate children's, and particularly boys', interests in literacy and creative development. School data show there is a gender gap between boys' and girls' achievement in these areas in particular. Although children enjoy a wide range of activities across all areas of learning inside, they are not experiencing the full range of activities outdoors. This is because the outdoor area has not been developed fully. Children, and especially boys, cannot therefore develop their writing and imaginative play outdoors as well as they do indoors. As a result, children's literacy and creative development are not maximised to the fullest extent.

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	105060
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	448297

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	413
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	George Davies
Headteacher	Stuart Brady
Date of previous school inspection	10 December 2009
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