



Black Horse Hill Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105027
Local Authority Wirral
Inspection number 287098
Inspection dates 11–12 October 2006
Reporting inspector Colin Smith

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Saughall Massie Road
School category	Community		West Kirby, Wirral
Age range of pupils	3–7		Merseyside CH48 6DR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 6255238
Number on roll (school)	169	Fax number	0151 6259041
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Jenny Horner
		Headteacher	Mrs Christine Cunnah
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–7	11–12 October 2006	287098

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is average in size. Numbers have fallen over recent years in line with the local authority as a whole. One fifth of the pupils live outside the immediate area. The school mainly serves an advantaged community. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A very small number are of Irish, Indian, Chinese, Black African or Caribbean heritage or from mixed backgrounds. None of these pupils are at an early stage of learning English. An independently organised childcare club operates on the site.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Black Horse Hill Infants is an outstanding school. Children get off to a flying start when they enter the Nursery. The high quality Foundation Stage education provided ensures that children's attainment is much higher than expected by the end of the Reception year. From the very first day in school, children are guided to act responsibly, think independently and work together harmoniously. Consequently, their personal development is excellent. They understand what it means to make the right choices, and when to say 'No'. Their maturity and social awareness, along with a firm grasp of healthy lifestyles and how to stay safe provides a first class foundation for their future education. The most vulnerable children, particularly, benefit from the exemplary care, guidance and support provided. Teachers and support staff, in partnership with outside agencies, are highly successful in raising their confidence and self-esteem and removing any barriers to learning.

Teaching is exemplary. Lessons are stimulating. The work provided is very challenging and finely tuned to pupils' different learning needs. Consequently, they are able to learn rapidly and very successfully. The stimulating curriculum captures pupils' interests, nurtures their creativity and fires their imagination. These factors make a vital contribution to pupils' high achievement and the exceptionally high standards reached in reading, mathematics and science. High standards are also achieved in information and communication technology (ICT). Standards in writing are well above average and improving as the school focuses increasing energy on this subject. More able pupils, boys and girls, make exceptionally good progress. Half of the Year 2 pupils achieve standards typically found amongst nine-year-olds. For the last two years, girls have achieved higher standards than boys. Recognising that the gap has widened beyond national differences, teachers have altered their lessons to have more appeal to boys. Boys are thoroughly enjoying exploring and investigating and are particularly motivated by the intriguing 'scary' topics. However, at present the gap in attainment remains.

Leadership and management are excellent at all levels. The headteacher leads a very capable and committed team of teachers and support staff who work in unison to maintain the very high standards achieved. The school's rigorous and accurate self-evaluation is fully endorsed by the findings of the inspection in all aspects of the school's work. Despite the school's many successes and popularity with parents and pupils, there is no hint of complacency. The drive to improve further is ever present. The school had a very successful previous inspection, from which it has gone on to reach even greater heights in providing excellent value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise boys' attainment to match the exceptionally high attainment of girls.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils' achievement and the standards they reach are outstanding. Many children enter school with attainment higher than expected for their age. However, a fifth of the children, mainly boys, have much lower starting points and benefit significantly from high quality additional support provided. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve extremely well and reach standards that are significantly higher than expected for their age by the end of the Reception year. Standards throughout the school are exceptionally high. The 2005 test results show pupils' attainment in reading and mathematics to be in the top 5% nationally and in writing, standards are well above the national average. These very high standards have been achieved year on year in response to the setting of challenging targets and teachers' determination that pupils should reach them. The achievement of more able pupils is exceptionally high. Half of the pupils in every year group achieve levels much higher than expected in reading and mathematics and one third of the pupils reach higher levels in writing. The few pupils in school with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress because of the high quality support they receive. Prior to 2005, the attainment of boys and girls was very similar. In 2005 and in 2006, girls reached higher standards than boys. The difference is wider than it is nationally, although boys often have lower starting points. On the whole, boys make good progress. The progress made by girls is excellent.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being is outstanding and the key to the school's success. Pupils are highly valued as individuals. Their feelings and perceptions are cherished and their independence is nurtured. As a result, their self-esteem and confidence grows. They become adept in taking responsibility and reaching collective and informed decisions in the classroom, within the school council and as playground leaders. This is why their capacity to look after themselves and appreciate healthy lifestyles is excellent for their age. Teachers make learning exciting and praise individuality and creativity. Consequently, pupils are imaginative and highly enterprising. They offer comments spontaneously, take the lead and think for themselves. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally good. Many pupils have developed a love of learning and an excellent awareness of other cultures and the wider world. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in the above average attendance, their excellent behaviour and the unanimous positive views of parents. As one parent commented, 'The school's Golden Rules and Ladder of Consequences are so popular and effective that my son has asked for the same system at home.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Pupils are swept along by the exciting and highly stimulating activities provided. Life in school is fun. Pupils' learning is meticulously assessed. Teachers use the information very purposefully to provide tasks at just the right level to cater for pupils' very different learning needs. This helps pupils to reach the ambitious targets set for them, significantly raising their achievement. Teachers place considerable emphasis on pupils finding out for themselves. Once teachers are certain that pupils know what they are trying to achieve, they provide the tools and support to enable them to succeed. In excellent Year 2 science and ICT lessons, pupils had to think hard, make predictions and test out their ideas. They became totally absorbed in exploring changes in materials and programming small electronic robots. Many of these activities have been specifically designed to appeal to boys in an effort to raise their achievement. All pupils thrive on such challenges and show great maturity in their capacity to work independently, or in pairs and groups, to solve problems.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides an excellent curriculum, not least because it is so well tailored to match pupils' different abilities, needs and interests. The school constantly evaluates the curriculum in terms of its impact on pupils' progress and personal development. For example, much attention is now focused on helping pupils to use more interesting language to improve their writing. The effects are evident. As one boy wrote, 'softly and silently, the owl swooped down.' To engage the interest of boys and enhance their progress, the curriculum has been modified. The early signs are promising, although it is too early to gauge the impact on their attainment. The high value placed on creativity is reflected in the delight on Reception children's faces as they eagerly anticipate reading and writing invitations to the monster party. The wide range of additional activities, including personal and health education and after school clubs, have a marked effect on pupils' enjoyment of school and prepares them very well to lead healthy, safe and fulfilling lives.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Staff are very well trained, to ensure that pupils' health, safety and protection are paramount. Pupils' academic progress and personal development are tracked meticulously. Vulnerable pupils receive special attention. Very well established links with outside agencies enables teachers and support staff to ensure that these pupils are safeguarded and given every chance to overcome their difficulties and cope with their disabilities. For example, a small number

of pupils are receiving specific attention to improve their listening and social skills. Such intervention enables them to achieve as well as they possibly can. All pupils benefit from constructive feedback on their progress. They all understand their targets for improvement. As one pupil explained, 'I have to check my work, make sure that my numbers are the right way round and be able to explain how I worked out the answers.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. The headteacher's vision and determination to provide the very best for the pupils has a significant impact on the work of the school. Teachers and support staff are ambitious and enthusiastic. Teamwork is excellent. These qualities have enabled the school to gain successive achievement awards and attain Investors in People status. At the heart of the school's ethos is the conviction that every child matters. Although data is used rigorously to check the performance of the school, the headteacher insists that 'children are people, not percentages'. It is not so much whether pupils' progress or personal development has accelerated or faltered, but why and what can be done to maintain or increase it. It is this attention to detail, centring on individual needs that provide the impetus for outstanding achievement and standards across the school. Since the previous inspection, pupils' handwriting and presentation has vastly improved. The work of the school is constantly evaluated. Subject leaders play a vital part in the process. The findings are shared. This helps governors to hold the school to account and play a central part in future planning. Having a crystal clear understanding of the school is a major factor in promoting improvement and providing value for money, both of which are excellent.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for talking to us, answering our questions and trying so hard to show what you can do. You were so friendly, helpful and polite that we greatly enjoyed our visit.

You are right to be proud. Your school is excellent in every way.

Most of all, we noticed how well your headteacher, teachers and helpers look after, care for and help you. This keeps you safe and you do not have to worry about anything. We think this may be why you all behave beautifully.

Your teachers work so hard to make your lessons interesting and we can see just how much you enjoy learning. This is probably why you make such excellent progress and your work is of such a high standard.

Your parents and teachers trust each other and are good friends. We think this really helps you to make the most of your time at school.

There is not much we could ask your school to improve but we will try. We have noticed that in the last two years girls have reached higher standards than boys. Boys do make good progress but the progress made by girls has been excellent. We would like your headteacher and teachers to do all they can to help the boys to reach the same very high standards as the girls. Come on boys, you can do it!

Please keep on trying your best and carry on helping your teachers and each other just as you did when we visited.