

Smithdown Primary School

Chatsworth Drive, Liverpool, Merseyside, L7 6LJ

Inspection dates

27–28 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- The school successfully caters for the needs of pupils drawn from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, almost half of whom join the school at different points during their school lives, and provides a harmonious and inclusive learning community.
- Achievement is good. From starting points that are well below average, those pupils who are in the school throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 make good progress and by the time they leave Year 6 their attainment is typically in line with the national average.
- The significant minority of pupils who join the school at different times during Key Stages 1 and 2 make good progress from their different starting points.
- Teaching is good. Relationships are very positive and interesting activities make learning interesting.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils are extremely polite and friendly and behave well in lessons and around school.
- Pupils report that they feel very safe and happy in school and parents overwhelmingly support this view. This is because the school's work to keep children safe and well cared for is outstanding.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well and they benefit from a well-planned and varied curriculum.
- School leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Steps they have taken to secure improvements, such as improving the teaching of writing and raising pupils' attainment in writing, have been successful.
- Governors are well informed and provide effective support and challenge to school leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- It is not consistently made clear to pupils what they need to do to improve their work and this stops pupils from making the most rapid progress.
- Pupils sometimes do not have enough time to complete work that helps them to practise and develop their skills and knowledge.
- School leaders' checks on teaching do not consistently look at the impact on pupils' learning.
- Procedures for tracking pupils' achievement are not sufficiently focused on the progress that pupils make or the impact that the support provided has on that progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons or parts of lessons, of which two were joint observations with the acting headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading in Key Stages 1 and 2, and held meetings with pupils drawn from across Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Meetings were held with the acting headteacher and other leaders, including subject leaders, the Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator and the special educational needs coordinator. Inspectors met with a small group of governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors undertook a scrutiny of pupils' current work.
- A range of other evidence was also considered by inspectors. This included the school's evaluation of its own performance, development planning, records of teachers' performance management, data about the achievement of pupils currently in the school, governing body minutes and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of 18 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and a survey of parents' views that the school had recently carried out. A small number of parents also shared their views of the school with inspectors during the inspection.
- Inspectors analysed 15 returns by staff to the inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Neil Dixon, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Terry Bond	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average sized primary school.
- The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average, as is the number of pupils for whom English is an additional language.
- Pupil mobility is high when compared with the national average as a significant minority of pupils join or leave the school at different points during Key Stages 1 and 2.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is broadly average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is well above average. The pupil premium is additional funding to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' progress and attainment.
- The school currently holds a number of awards, including Healthy School accreditation and the Eco Schools Award.
- At the time of the inspection the school's headteacher was absent from school on a period of extended leave due to ill health. Governors had recently appointed the school's deputy headteacher to the role of acting headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching and increase the rate of progress made by pupils across the school by:
 - ensuring that pupils receive clear guidance on how to improve their work
 - ensuring that pupils have enough time to practise and develop their skills by completing the work that is set for them.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - ensuring that all school leaders, including governors, track more closely the progress all groups of pupils make across the school
 - ensuring that the regular checks that school leaders make on the quality of teaching focus on the impact on pupils' learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start school with skills and knowledge that are well below those expected for their age, particularly in communication and language and physical development. A significant minority of children are at an early stage of learning English. Good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage provides children with a good start to their school lives and, although attainment at the end of the Reception Year is below the national average, children's progress is good.
- Good progress is maintained in Key Stage 1. While attainment at the end of Year 2 is still below the national average overall, almost all pupils who have been in the school since the end of the Reception class make at least the expected level of progress and attain well, while those pupils who join the school at different stages during Key Stage 1 make good progress from their different starting points. However, sometimes pupils are not given enough time to complete the work that is set for them which stops them from fully practising and building on the skills that they have been taught. As a result, only a small number of pupils make more than the expected amount of progress.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, the attainment of pupils who have been in the school from the beginning of Key Stage 1 is typically in line with the national average. This represents good progress. More than two out of every five pupils join the school at varying points during Key Stages 1 and 2, and although their attainment by the end of Year 6 is typically lower than the other pupils, they make good progress from their individual starting points.
- Pupils' progress in reading is good. Recent improvements in the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) are helping to accelerate pupils' progress. As a result, by the end of Year 2, pupils use their knowledge of phonics to help them decode new words.
- Pupils make good progress in writing. Pupils across the school are able to write in a range of different styles, such as writing explanations and to convey historical facts. While attainment in the Key Stage 2 English grammar, spelling and punctuation test in 2013 was lower than in writing overall, the school has effectively introduced strategies to raise attainment in this area, particularly for those pupils for whom English is an additional language.
- Achievement in mathematics is good. Pupils work well together to use their basic numeracy skills when tackling problem-solving tasks, and some pupils in Year 6 are working confidently on challenging tasks at the highest level (Level 6.) This is typical of the good progress that the most able pupils make in mathematics, which matches their good progress in reading and writing.
- All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabled pupils, those from minority ethnic groups including those who speak English as an additional language make good progress during their time in the school from their own individual starting points and achieve well. This is indicative of the school's effective promotion of equal opportunities.
- The funding for pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is used effectively, so that the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average and their progress is typically as good as other pupils in the school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching across the school is good overall and enables pupils to make good progress.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is a good blend of activities that children choose for themselves and ones that are directed by adults. Children develop their language and communication skills well as a result of many opportunities for discussion. As a result, children become more confident in talking with adults and other children. Recent enhancements to the outdoor area ensure that children now benefit from a wide range of opportunities to improve their physical development.
- Pupils respond well to high expectations and a wide range of activities that help to develop their skills in working together and alone. This was evident in mathematics where pupils showed

enthusiasm and determination in tackling a series of challenging word problems, using their knowledge to identify the best way to tackle each question and find the solution. They clearly enjoyed their learning and the progress they made was outstanding.

- Good subject knowledge across the curriculum is shared with pupils and they benefit from this because tasks are interesting and involve challenge whatever their ability or individual starting points.
- Reading is taught effectively, and pupils across Key Stages 1 and 2 have plenty of opportunities to develop their reading skills across the curriculum, such as when using tablet computers to carry out research in science and history. Changes to the school's approach to teaching phonics have been successful in making sure that tasks are more closely matched to pupils' current levels of understanding and as a result, pupils' progress in phonics is improving.
- Marking of pupils' work is thorough and regular and teachers set pupils targets for moving their work forwards. However, it is not consistently made clear to pupils what they need to do to improve their work. As a result, marking and the use of pupils' targets are not fully effective in improving pupils' progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. One governor's accurate summary was that 'This is a happy school,' and this was a view shared by pupils, staff and parents. Pupils say that poor behaviour hardly ever happens in their school, and all are confident that the adults in school would deal effectively with any problems or concerns that they may have.
- Pupils are very polite and welcoming. Those who have recently arrived at the school say that they have been made to feel very welcome by their classmates. At lunchtimes and playtimes, pupils mix well and get on with each other, and their play is supported effectively by older pupils acting as 'play leaders'.
- Pupils show positive attitudes to learning. Attractive displays of art and written work, linked to different themes, show that they take pride in their work. In class, pupils cooperate well together and behaviour in lessons is consistently good, although not yet outstanding because in lessons where the pace of learning is slower and they have to wait to start their work, pupils sometimes lose focus and this stops them making the most rapid progress.
- The school has been very successful in improving attendance, and pupils clearly enjoy coming to school. Attendance overall is now typically average and persistent absenteeism is very rare.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils say that they feel very safe in the school and can confidently explain how to keep themselves safe in different situations, including when using the internet.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of different forms of bullying, including racist and homophobic bullying, because the school's work in addressing issues relating to bullying and preventing it from happening is extremely successful. As a result, pupils are proud to say that bullying hardly ever happens in their school.
- Parents' responses to the 'Parent View' online survey, a survey of parental views previously conducted by the school and conversations with inspectors during the inspection, strongly indicate that parents are pleased with the standard of behaviour and safety in the school. All the parents who responded to 'Parent View' understandably said that they would recommend the school to another parent.

The leadership and management are good

- The acting headteacher, well supported by hard working subject and area leaders, is providing very clear direction for the school and has ably demonstrated that the school has the capacity to continue to move forwards in the absence of the headteacher. He has the strong support of staff at all levels and this has created a powerful and effective team throughout the school.

- School leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and where it could do better. The detailed school improvement plan is based on a robust and accurate view of the school's performance and correctly identifies the key priorities for improvement. Regular checks are made on pupils' attainment and the information used to target extra support where it is most needed. The acting headteacher is putting in place a more consistent system for tracking pupils' progress from their individual starting points and over time and this is beginning to be used to more effectively track the success of any extra support that has been put in place, although this is not yet fully embedded.
- Regular checks are made on the quality of teaching and the acting headteacher has an accurate view of the strengths in teaching across the school and where it could be improved. While checks on teaching are thorough, the feedback given to teachers does not always make clear the link between teaching and pupils' learning. However, targets set for teachers' performance are linked to pupils' achievement, and there is a clear link between teachers' pay and performance.
- School leaders have been very effective in engaging parents in the life of the school, and in providing excellent support to the most vulnerable families. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and school events are now extremely well attended. One pupil described the 'Families and School Together' initiative, which brings parents and younger siblings into school, as being her favourite part of the school week.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceedingly well, as is evident in the quality of children's artwork and the high level of care that pupils show for each other, and for children in other schools such as their partner school in Mozambique.
- The curriculum provides good learning opportunities for all pupils, whatever their starting points or academic ability. The effective use of information and communication technology across all year groups and throughout the curriculum is a strength of the school and a range of clubs and trips to places of interest such as Martin Mere and the Maritime Museum enhance the curriculum.
- The school makes effective use of the additional funding for primary school sport. A specialist teacher and skilled coaches provide a good range of physical education and games opportunities for pupils and also provide ongoing training for school staff.
- The local authority provides effective support and guidance for the school, such as helping to ensure that robust plans were in place prior to the planned absence of the headteacher and ensuring that the acting headteacher has access to a headteacher mentor if required.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a good understanding of the school's context, strengths and areas for development. They review published data on pupils' achievement and provide appropriate challenge to school leaders, although their knowledge of pupils' progress data is not as detailed as their understanding of data around attainment and attendance.
 - Governors ensure that the school's finances are well managed and enhance the quality of learning for pupils. They have very successfully created a bright and well-maintained school environment that is regularly enhanced with new developments, such as improvements to the outdoor play area for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
 - Governors are aware of how pupil premium funding is used and the impact that it is having on pupils' progress. They ensure that the statutory duties of the governing body are fulfilled, particularly with regard to safeguarding and checks on procedures for managing teachers' 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	131597
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	440883

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	250
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Norman Christian
Headteacher	Robina Crowe
Date of previous school inspection	23 February 2011
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