

Blackmoor Park Infants' School

45–65 Leyfield Road, West Derby, Liverpool, Merseyside L12 9EY

Inspection dates

30 November–1 December 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Current pupils do not make consistently good progress across a range of subjects, especially in writing, and across most year groups.
- The headteacher has recently made enforced changes to the leadership of the school, but these have not yet had enough positive impact on the quality of education.
- Teachers do not consistently plan work that matches pupils' needs.
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics and English is below the national average.
- The school's assessment procedures are not precise or clear enough.
- Children in early years do not make rapid enough progress over time.
- Leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics do not effectively evaluate the impact of their actions to improve pupils' progress.
- The most able pupils are not set work that stretches them consistently enough.
- Leaders do not currently make the most effective use the extra funding to support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities or pupils who are disadvantaged.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has shown resilience and determination in the face of recent difficulties that have had an impact on the quality of education the school provides.
- The headteacher has a clear and accurate understanding of the school's areas for improvement and has put actions in place to address them.
- Governors know the school well. They challenge and support senior leaders effectively.
- Pupils feel safe and enjoy coming to school. Their behaviour is good.
- The majority of parents are positive about the education and care the school provides.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - developing recently appointed leaders' skills and knowledge to ensure that they bring about improvement in their leadership area
 - making sure that leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics secure deeper understanding and stronger progress for pupils in their subject
 - making the most effective use of the pupil premium funding to secure stronger progress for disadvantaged pupils
 - using the extra funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to ensure that they make better progress
 - reviewing the school's assessment and tracking systems to make them more precise and clear.
- Secure consistently good progress across all year groups and in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics, by:
 - establishing more firmly the recent strategies to improve pupils' progress in writing, both in English and across the curriculum
 - providing more consistently challenging work for the most able pupils
 - planning and teaching lessons that more frequently match pupils' needs and abilities.
- Ensure more rapid progress for children in early years by:
 - consistently setting high expectations of children's work, especially for the most able, so that the maximum number of children are engaged and learning
 - ensuring that children who are disadvantaged receive effective support to make strong progress
 - ensuring that assessment procedures for the early years provision are as consistent and accurate as possible.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The considerable upheaval the school has experienced over the past three years has contributed to variability in pupils' achievement since 2015. The headteacher recognises that there are shortcomings in the quality of education the school currently provides. She has been very successful in pinpointing the school's areas for improvement. She has honestly and accurately evaluated that the changes in leadership, brought about by some staff absences and by the recent departure of members of the senior leadership team, do not yet have a strong enough impact on improving outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders have devised an appropriate action plan which identifies the key areas for improvement. They have chosen suitable strategies to bring about, for example stronger progress in writing and more robust assessment procedures across the curriculum. However, statements about how they will evaluate their actions do not consistently have a sharp and measurable focus on pupils' achievement.
- The headteacher accepts that the school's assessment system is in need of review, following the recent departure of key staff. Although there are regular meetings between senior leaders and staff to discuss pupils' progress, the tracking of pupils' achievement is not precise enough to give a clear picture of progress year on year.
- The leader for the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is a recent internal appointment, following the long-term absence of the previous post holder. She has enthusiastically taken on the role and now uses the extra funding to make sure that she more efficiently organises the range of support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. She has also strengthened the school's relationship with parents in order to provide better coordinated support for pupils' needs. However, the progress of current pupils in this group, though improving, is not consistently good enough. Furthermore, the leader for SEN provision does not yet have a clear picture of the progress pupils make.
- Leaders of English and mathematics have a good appreciation of standards in their subject. They are clear about areas for development and have put strategies in place to secure improvement. For example, in writing, the use of an 'immersive' approach encourages the use of speech and drama to stimulate pupils' interest, with the aim of improving the quality of their writing. In mathematics, there has been an increased emphasis on problem solving and reasoning, with teachers encouraging pupils to 'have a go' at puzzles on the 'problem-solving wall' in their own time. However, currently, pupils make inconsistent progress, particularly in writing and mathematics, and leaders do not set ambitious enough targets for achievement.
- Leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics are clear about the learning expectations for each year group. They systematically check that teachers are delivering the correct subject content, but they are less familiar with the progress pupils make and do not evaluate the impact of their actions with enough precision. As a result, they do not yet have a strategy to ensure that pupils develop consistently deep knowledge, understanding and skills across a range of these subjects.
- Leaders recognise that, in Reception Year and Year 2, disadvantaged pupils'

achievement declined at the end of 2016/17. As part of the headteacher's review of leadership, there is, as of September 2017, a 'pupil premium champion' in place, whose role is to keep a close check on the progress of disadvantaged pupils and on the effectiveness of the support leaders provide. This support includes work with small groups and individual pupils to improve their mathematical and English skills. Although these strategies are beginning to have a positive influence, progress for this group of pupils is not yet consistently strong enough to suggest that the extra funding is used to its maximum effect.

- The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the national phonics check in Year 1 was close to the national average in 2016. However, this figure declined in 2017. Leaders have appointed a member of staff to the role of phonics lead, who now checks on the quality of teaching, through activities such as lesson observations. It is still too soon to see the full impact of leaders' actions but there is evidence of pupils using their phonics knowledge well to inform their writing and spelling.
- Staff are positive about the school and appreciate the professional development leaders provide. They enjoy a variety of training, including formal courses and opportunities to see good practice in other schools, and they feel that it helps them towards meeting their individual performance targets. Consequently, the quality of teaching is improving.
- Leaders use the primary school physical education and sport funding effectively. They arrange a variety of sports clubs and competitions and give opportunities for staff to strengthen their subject knowledge and teaching skills. They buy in the services of the Liverpool Schools Sports Partnership to help them with their programme of activities.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is broad and balanced and they cater well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They also promote British values well. There are opportunities for pupils to attend clubs, such as those for dance, choir and sports, and pupils enjoy educational visits, such as to local museums. Leaders develop pupils' understanding of other faiths through, for example, programmes of lessons in religious education. Pupils talk in simple terms about democracy, making reference to elections to the school council. Lessons in personal, social and health education and a planned programme of assemblies enable pupils to discuss stories concerned with, for example, right and wrong.
- Until recently, the local authority had a 'light-touch' involvement with the school. It now provides more frequent support in response to the school's decline in performance. Advisers are clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses and make regular visits to keep a check on progress. They feed back accurately on the quality of education the school provides, making useful suggestions for strategies to support improvement.
- The majority of parents are happy with the quality of education the school provides. Those who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, felt that their children make good progress and that teachers keep pupils safe.

Governance of the school

- Governors are well trained and knowledgeable about safeguarding. The chair of the governing body also has specialist knowledge about situations where organisations need to apply 'lockdown' procedures. She provides regular training to staff and pupils so that they will know how to act in the event of such an emergency.
- Governors are aware of the strengths and areas for development of the school. They challenge and support leaders well to ensure that they secure improvement. For example, the chair of the governing body began her role in 2015 and immediately recognised the need to manage underperformance within the senior leadership team. Governors sought advice and support from the local authority and successfully tackled the issues. Leadership is now improving as a result.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The employment checks the school carries out on members of staff are thorough and meet requirements.
- Records of safeguarding concerns are well organised and detailed. The designated safeguarding lead makes referrals to external agencies when required and pursues matters vigorously if necessary.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders train staff well so they know how to be alert to signs of abuse and to issues concerned with radicalisation. Staff are completely familiar with the school's reporting procedures if they have concerns about pupils' well-being. Leaders provide extra safety training to pupils and staff so they are able to react appropriately to emergencies requiring 'lockdown'. This training also provides important knowledge that pupils can apply in their lives outside school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment do not secure consistently strong progress for pupils across a range of subjects. The progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and of pupils who are disadvantaged also lacks consistency. This is because there is variability in the quality of teaching and support across classes and sometimes within classes.
- Some teachers do not plan lessons precisely enough to ensure that there is consistent challenge for pupils at an appropriate level. This can result in lost learning time for different groups of pupils. The most able pupils sometimes find their work too easy and finish it quickly, without further opportunities to deepen their learning. The less able pupils sometimes do not understand the task and depend on the teacher to support them. On such occasions, these pupils also show that they do not have strategies to grapple with the work for themselves.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge. However, they do not use it effectively enough to plan lessons which consistently keep pupils interested and enable them to increase rapidly their knowledge, skills and understanding. Inspectors observed a few occasions where some pupils' behaviour disrupted the work of others because teachers

had not sufficiently matched the tasks to the pupils' needs and abilities. However, these occasions were usually short lived and are infrequent.

- Across the curriculum, the application of skills pupils have acquired in English and mathematics is variable. In science, in Year 2, for example, the most able pupils in one class enjoy opportunities to write expansively and with a high level of sophistication about autumn. In another Year 2 class, however, pupils of similar ability complete tasks that are mundane and too simple and do not give them the chance to apply their higher order writing skills. There are few examples of pupils using their mathematical skills in other subjects.
- The strategies introduced by the subject leaders for English and mathematics are improving the quality of teaching in those subjects. Where teaching is more effective, teachers provide work that is better aligned to pupils' abilities and encourage pupils to think more deeply and justify their responses. For example, in writing in Year 2, the most able pupils correctly use more complex punctuation, such as inverted commas, and language structures, such as, 'I was woken by my mother screaming and shouting for me to wake up.' In mathematics, in Year 1, the less able pupils have the chance to apply their reasoning and problem-solving skills by, for example, solving puzzles involving missing numbers up to 20.
- Where teaching is stronger, teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and encourage positive attitudes to work in class. They address misconceptions well and ask questions which are effective in testing pupils' understanding, allowing pupils correctly to explain, for instance, how they know that a given sentence is not a question.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They say that this is because adults are kind and help them if they are stuck or worried. Leaders make sure that the internet is safe for pupils to use, with its system of filters to prevent access to inappropriate content. They also train pupils in how to stay safe in emergencies that may require 'lockdown', which are skills they can take into their life outside school.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Pupils say that their teachers usually challenge them in their learning, although they find some work is easy. They enjoy the activities they do to raise funds for chosen charities. Pupils also enjoy the range of clubs and visits leaders provide for them. These activities contribute well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils understand, at an appropriate level for their age, different types of bullying and use of derogatory language. They report that there are very few incidents. They also know that adults will manage well any issues that arise and feel confident to report their concerns to them. They say that pupils do not use discriminatory language.
- Pupils are courteous and are confident enough to approach trusted adults and engage them in conversation.

- Sometimes, pupils who are less able do not have the resilience to try hard for themselves because teachers do not give them strategies that will help.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils demonstrate good conduct around school, occasionally showing impeccable behaviour, such as in assembly.
- Pupils play well at breaktimes, showing strong social skills and a good awareness of the expectations of behaviour in the playground.
- Pupils typically respond well to teachers' strategies to manage behaviour, complying quickly with requests or instructions from staff. Their mostly good behaviour in class contributes to the gradually improving progress current pupils make.
- Attendance is close to the national average for all pupils. Persistent absence among disadvantaged pupils reduced dramatically in 2016/17. This is because leaders have taken effective action, which includes commissioning the local authority's education welfare officer to provide support, introducing closer tracking of absentees and making earlier contact with parents to discuss absences.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Published assessment information shows below-average attainment, especially in writing and in mathematics, by the end of Year 2. Although this improved slightly in 2017, the progress of current pupils across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, is not yet consistently good.
- In subjects other than English and mathematics, pupils do not develop deep enough knowledge, understanding or skills. In history in Year 2, for instance, pupils complete simple tasks about, for example, chronology, but there is no evidence that teachers plan activities to deepen understanding, especially for the most able.
- School leaders have correctly identified that progress in writing is of particular concern. They have taken action to address this, putting in place strategies to improve the teaching of writing, such as introducing more speech and drama to act as a stimulus for writing. Although there is some evidence that progress is improving, it is still not consistently good enough.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in Year 2 whose attainment was close to the national average for non-disadvantaged pupils declined in 2017 compared with 2016. The headteacher has appointed a member of staff to lead the work on securing stronger progress for this group. She has this term revised the programme of activities to support disadvantaged pupils. These include extra sessions in mathematics and English and dedicated time in the outdoor learning area in the school grounds to develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Evidence from pupils' books shows that these strategies have yet to have an impact, as progress is not consistently strong enough.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make progress that is improving but is still

variable. The recently appointed special educational needs coordinator has been efficient in ensuring that support is now in place for these pupils. This comes after a period of instability caused by the long-term absence of the previous post holder. However, it is still too soon to see the positive impact of these actions.

- There is evidence to show that some pupils make good progress. In writing in Year 2, for example, the most able pupils use a more complex structure in their sentences and more sophisticated punctuation, such as semi-colons, and inverted commas to indicate speech. The less able pupils show good progress from lower starting points, developing much improved letter formation. In mathematics, pupils use their reasoning skills well and explain their work and justify responses they make.
- Pupils enjoy reading and talk enthusiastically about their favourite authors and the range of books they read. Assessment information shows that pupils' achievement in reading is stronger than that in writing and in mathematics.
- Although the proportion of pupils in Year 2 who reached the expected standard in English and in mathematics was below the national average in 2017, the majority of pupils were ready for Year 3 in reading and in mathematics.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The majority of children enter Nursery Year with knowledge and skills below those typical for their age and stage of development. By the time these children finish their Nursery Year, the majority have made good progress and are ready for Reception Year. On entry to the Reception classes, the majority of children, around half of whom come from other settings, have skills and knowledge below those typical for their age and stage of development. However, leaders assess that a high proportion of the children who have attended the Nursery class also have similar skills and knowledge. This indicates an inconsistency in the school's assessment procedure at this point, since they make good progress in their Nursery Year.
- Over time, published assessment information shows that children make typical progress from their starting points, so that about half of them achieve a good level of development. Although this rose to about two thirds in 2017, progress is not consistently strong and leaders have not yet established a pattern where in each year, most children are ready for Year 1.
- The proportion of disadvantaged children that reached the expected standard in reading, in writing and in mathematics declined in 2017 and is below the national average for children who are not disadvantaged. This shows that the pupil premium funding has not been used to best effect, although leaders have taken steps to address this by appointing a member of staff to oversee improvements. The impact of this action is not yet clear.
- Some aspects of teaching are inconsistent in quality. Teachers do not regularly have high expectations of children's work, with the result that some children lose interest. On some occasions, support staff do not make the most of their time to ensure that they are helping children to learn well. Teachers are also inconsistent in the degree of challenge they provide to the most able children, which is reflected in typically low proportions of children exceeding the expected standard at the end of Reception Year.

- There are many effective features of teaching. The learning environment is bright and stimulating, and is supportive of children’s development of language and number. Children behave well in class and understand the class rules and expectations of behaviour. Generally, most children concentrate on their tasks, show that they enjoy school and feel safe. Teachers explain well to children what they are expected to learn and how to do it.
- The early years leader has securely evaluated the areas for development in the provision and has a suitable action plan to bring about improvements, particularly in the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception Year. This includes activities to support early development of children’s fine motor skills. It is still too soon, however, to see sustained impact of these actions.
- Leaders involve parents in the initial assessment of their children as they enter the Nursery and Reception classes and throughout their time in the provision. There is also a programme of transition activities, which involves liaising with other providers, such as local nurseries.
- There are no breaches of the statutory welfare requirements.

School details

Unique reference number	104592
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10032809

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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	303
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joanne Carter
Headteacher	Joanne Hitchmough
Telephone number	0151 228 8576
Website	www.bpinfant.com
Email address	headteacher@bpinfant.com
Date of previous inspection	11–12 December 2006

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Blackmoor Park Infants' School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for their SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan or a statement of SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.

- The proportion of pupils who leave or join the school at times other than the start of Reception Year is below the national average.
- The headteacher took up her post at Blackmoor Park Infants' School in September 2013, following the retirement of the previous headteacher. She has steered the school through some difficult times since then. All members of the school community experienced deep shock at the tragic death of a pupil in a road traffic incident three years ago. They continue to experience the emotional after-effects today. There have been growing issues around the senior leadership of the school, which have recently culminated in the need for significant change. There was also a high rate of unexpected staff absence due to illness in 2016/17.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors carried out observations of learning in all year groups. Some of these were joint observations between the headteacher and the lead inspector. The headteacher was also present at inspection team meetings.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school’s self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, records of monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, records of incidents of poor behaviour or bullying, and records connected with the safeguarding of children.
- Inspectors had discussions with various stakeholders, including the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, other members of staff, the chair of the governing body and other members of the governing body, two representatives of the local authority, and parents and pupils.
- Inspectors analysed pupils’ work in English and mathematics, as well as their work in other subjects. They also looked at the work of children in early years.
- The lead inspector evaluated 38 responses received through Parent View, Ofsted’s online survey, during the inspection. He also considered a communication by email from one parent.

Inspection team

Mark Quinn, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Gaynor Rennie	Ofsted Inspector
Deborah Bailey	Ofsted Inspector
John Daley	Ofsted Inspector

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