

Northcote Primary School

Cavendish Drive, Walton, Liverpool, Merseyside, L9 1HW

Inspection dates 7–8 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.

- Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy learning. Parents expressed positive views and all said they would recommend this school to others.
- The extensive range of clubs, trips and extra activities is a real strength and makes a very strong contribution to pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The headteacher’s dedication and vision to continually improve the work of the school is fully shared by leaders, governors and staff. Their hard work and commitment have successfully improved pupils’ achievement and the quality of teaching and raised attendance to match national averages.
- Good behaviour in lessons and around the school creates a calm environment that helps pupils learn well.
- Procedures to keep pupils safe and secure are outstanding. Pastoral care is a strength and pupils say they feel very safe at all times, and parents agree.
- Good teaching provides well-planned lessons that stimulate pupils’ interest so they are keen to learn and tackle their tasks willingly.
- All pupils progress well during their time in school, including those with disabilities or special educational needs and those who are disadvantaged. When they leave, attainment matches and sometimes exceeds national averages in reading, writing, mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage provides children with a good, secure and happy start to their time in school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching does not yet result in outstanding achievement for pupils.
- Attainment in reading and writing in Key Stage 1 is below national averages. Pupils do not reach the nationally expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 23 lessons and part-lessons, including some observed jointly with senior staff.
- They listened to readers from Years 1, 2 and 6, and observed pupils during break times.
- Inspectors met with pupils, staff, school leaders, members of the governing body and the local authority's representative.
- The team looked at pupils' books, the school's current achievement data and the systems used to gather an accurate picture of pupil performance.
- They looked at how the school monitors the quality of teaching and learning and checked the arrangements for safeguarding pupils.
- The team looked at the 15 responses recorded online in Ofsted's Parent View, the school's most recent parent survey and the 28 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Kathleen McArthur, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Sheila Iwoskaw	Additional Inspector
Julie Webster	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than most primary schools, and pupil numbers have increased since the previous inspection.
- The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage, although the proportion from other heritages is increasing.
- Two thirds of the pupils are supported by pupil premium funding, which is well above average. (The pupil premium is additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority).
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus is below the national average. Those with a statement of their special educational needs is above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school offers breakfast and after-school clubs and a very extensive range of activities before, at lunchtime and after school.
- Two assistant headteachers have been appointed to the senior leadership team this year.
- The school holds a number of awards, including Artsmark Gold, Basic Skills Quality Mark and International Schools Award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching so more is outstanding by sharing the high quality skills and strong practice already found in the school in a more focused way, closely targeted at where improvement is most needed.
- Raise attainment in reading and writing at Key Stage 1 by:
 - embedding the scheme for teaching letters and the sounds they make (phonics)
 - ensuring all staff are fully trained and skilled in delivering phonics lessons and activities
 - making books more widely available and highly visible in all learning situations, particularly for younger pupils
 - ensuring pupils know and use the basic skills in their writing and have wider opportunities to use and develop their writing skills in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders are firmly committed to a very clear vision, and are successful in their aim to provide equal opportunities for every pupil to make good or better progress in a secure, happy environment. The rising trend in achievement, especially for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils, and measures that have raised attendance levels show the effectiveness of their actions.
- Although the school evaluated its performance higher than the inspection found, plans for improvement show a thorough analysis of pupil achievement and are appropriately closely focused on raising attainment and progress, particularly in reading and writing at Key Stage 1.
- Leaders have recently developed a 'sharing good practice' scheme, showing their deep commitment to extend the outstanding teaching skills already found in the school, but this is not closely targeted to where most needed. Regular, rigorous appraisal and performance management leads to priorities for professional development, and staff say this is valuable.
- Senior staff are high-quality role models for middle leaders and develop their skills, for example through the 'task teams', resulting in better achievement in English and mathematics.
- High-quality spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, with good regard to the promotion of traditional British values, successfully promotes pupils' respect for others, good behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Experiences pupils might not otherwise meet are provided through activities that really enrich the curriculum and help raise aspirations for the future: visits out of school, participating in the Children's University, learning an instrument and playing at the Philharmonic Hall or performing with the choir. The international link with a school in Sri Lanka and staff exchange visits gives pupils insight and experience of a very different culture.
- Pupils say the large number of clubs for all ages is one of the best things about their school. These range from homework to street dance, cross country, multi-sports and chess.
- The curriculum is carefully adapted to meet pupils' different needs and abilities, ensuring they acquire literacy and numeracy skills needed for future learning. Using these skills across the curriculum, making links between subjects such as the history, art and geography of Ancient Egypt or calculating the outcomes of science investigations, supports pupils' good progress.
- Robust arrangements to safeguard pupils meet all statutory requirements.
- The local authority provides 'light touch' support for this good school and has used the skills of leaders and staff as examples of good practice.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is highly committed to the vision for ongoing improvement by providing equal opportunities for each pupil to reach their full potential.
 - Visits to school, participation in 'learning walks' and staff training days mean they are well informed. They understand and use data to compare the school's performance with others and to challenge school leaders, for example about what is being done to improve reading and writing for younger pupils.
 - Very carefully managed finances support priorities for improvement. Rigorous checks ensure pupil premium funds are used effectively and governors know that any gaps between the performance of pupils covered by the funds and other pupils are minimal.
 - Staff performance reviews are shared with governors who make sure any salary rewards are given only when staff help pupils to learn well. New staff are expected to bring something extra to the school community.
 - Professional development is used to improve the quality of teaching and develop leadership skills at all levels, for example, revising the senior leadership team by appointing two assistant headteachers, one covering Key Stage 2 and one covering Key Stage 1 and the Early Years Foundation Stage.
 - Governors ensure that sports funding provides a wide range of physical activities available to pupils across the school. They report that pupils are enjoying the additional activities and staff are acquiring new skills to use with their pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. School records, inspection observations and discussions with pupils and staff and parents' responses show that this is typical. Pupils learn in a clean, orderly environment with a happy atmosphere, with plenty of well-supervised activities that keep them busy and active outside at break times.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and are willing learners. Pupils say behaviour is usually good but that a small number of pupils occasionally misbehave.
- Pupils are very caring towards younger ones, show respect, consideration and are helpful to staff and each other. They take on responsibilities willingly, such as school councillors, play leaders or Eco warriors.
- Highest quality pastoral care provides sensitive help to pupils and families. Extremely strong links with external agencies bring a wide range of support to pupils who may be vulnerable and for their families. Consequently, these pupils progress as well as their classmates.
- Attendance has improved to the national average and most pupils arrive in good time each day. The school uses every possible method to maintain this improving picture, including providing alarm clocks, telephoned reminders and even collecting pupils. The well-attended breakfast club offers healthy food and activities, ensuring pupils are ready for learning. Very popular extra-curricular clubs offer pupils a variety of sports and activities.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. All staff and governors have been trained and are fully aware of procedures and all records are maintained meticulously. Consequently, pupils say they feel very safe and their parents confirm this.
- Pupils say they are surrounded by 'lovely people' and staff always help if they have any problems. They say bullying behaviour is very rare but they would always tell someone if they experienced any, and the headteacher would contact parents. Anti-bullying week ensures pupils know of different types of bullying such as cyber-bullying.

The quality of teaching is good

- Well-organised classrooms with attractive displays of prompts that aid learning encourage pupils to aim high so they achieve well. English, mathematics and science lessons are particular favourites. Although little pupil work is on display, pupils present their work with care and say teachers always expect them to try their best.
- Staff use their good subject knowledge to ask searching questions and give clear explanations to stimulate pupils' thinking skills and deepen their understanding. Pupils are keen to answer because they like to be challenged. Older pupils who find learning easy really enjoyed being stretched and explaining how they worked out their answers in a lesson on subtraction.
- Good behaviour, observed in nearly all lessons, supportive relationships and skilful behaviour management ensure pupils progress well. Just occasionally, in a few classes, a very small number of pupils do not always concentrate on their tasks which slows their progress.
- Staff are fully accountable for their pupils' progress. High-quality systems and frequent progress reviews provide clear information about how well pupils are learning, enabling staff to provide extra help swiftly if any fall behind. Staff make full use of this information to plan lessons or to carefully direct questions that allow pupils of all abilities to take part in whole-class activities.
- Pupils say their work is marked regularly. The marking code is well established and inspectors saw some good examples of pupils, even younger ones, responding to teacher's points for improvement. The well-trained learning support assistants are used effectively and work closely with teachers to move all groups of pupils on in their learning by providing timely intervention and support.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Progress is good for all groups of pupils. Inspection evidence and school data show that progress is accelerating in all subjects. Most make the progress they are expected to make and more pupils than found nationally are making better than expected progress. Pupils also progress well in subjects such as science and physical education because they enjoy practical activities.
- Progress accelerates at the end of Key Stage 2 and attainment matches national averages when pupils

leave the school. Unvalidated data for 2014 shows pupils exceeded national averages in all subjects and more attained the higher levels in mathematics and writing. Pupils' workbooks and school data show those currently in Year 6 are on course to reach or exceed national averages in reading, writing, mathematics and English, grammar, punctuation and spelling. Pupils leave the school well equipped with the skills needed to continue their education.

- Attainment in Key Stage 1 has remained below national averages for a number of years, most particularly in reading and writing, and few pupils have attained the higher level. The whole-school focus on improving writing has not been as effective for younger pupils as for older ones. Basic skills such as using full stops and capital letters are not embedded and written work is not well organised. Simple strategies to help, including 'Think it, say it, write it' are at an early stage of improving outcomes for pupils.
- The most able pupils and those with particular talents are given extra challenges and more complex work, for example, attending 'master classes' and experiencing curriculum enrichment in all areas. A greater proportion is now reaching the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Those covered by pupil premium funding progress as well, and often more rapidly, than their classmates. Current school data show their attainment matches their classmates in reading and writing but is half a term behind in mathematics. When compared with pupils nationally who are not covered by the pupil premium, attainment exceeds them by half a term in reading and writing but is half a term behind in mathematics. School data show any remaining minor gaps are rapidly narrowing due to carefully placed additional support.
- The provision for pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs is well managed and organised. Additional help with learning enables these pupils to progress as well as their classmates.
- In both 2013 and 2014, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the sounds and letters (phonics) screening check was below the national figure. Phonics lessons are delivered in small groups targeted to different abilities. Younger pupils 'sound out' and blend letters to tackle new words and use their knowledge of letter sounds in their written work. Leaders are well aware of the need to ensure all staff are trained to deliver the new phonics scheme.
- Most pupils say they read to their parents. Older pupils say they enjoy reading, especially fiction by Roald Dahl or David Walliams, but books do not have a high profile in younger classes so pupils were less enthusiastic.

The early years provision

is good

- Children enter the nursery with skills that are below and often significantly below those typical for their age especially in language and communication. This is also the case for those who do not attend the nursery but enter directly into Reception. The very caring, welcoming atmosphere in the Nursery and Reception classes ensures they feel safe and secure and eager to learn both inside and in the attractive outdoor area.
- Good teaching in small groups ensures children meet well-planned, purposeful learning opportunities. Progress is carefully monitored and findings used to plan activities that capture children's interest and are closely matched to their abilities. This enables them all to make good progress in every area of learning.
- Children meet a good mixture of adult-directed activities and ones they initiate for themselves. They become increasingly independent and confident, exploring their interests and choosing from the wide range of activities. Their behaviour is good and they respond well to staff. They are encouraged to make decisions and to take responsibility and soon learn to share, take turns and tidy up after an activity.
- Nursery children navigate through the story of *Three Little Pigs* using hand-held technology and learn numbers through rhymes and songs, such as '*Five little men in a flying Saucer*'. By the time they are in Reception, children are able to help their puppet friend, Mr Muddles, sort out 3D cubes, cylinders and cuboids and use technology to record different shapes in the environment.
- Reception children build on the sounds they have learnt in the nursery but do not often visit the book corner or have access to books in all areas of learning, including the outdoor area.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed, with excellent care for children's well-being and safety. By the end of Reception class, skills are just below those typical for their age but children are ready and prepared for the transition into Year 1.

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	104564
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	448274

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	399
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Lawless MBE
Headteacher	Roy Morgan
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2010
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