

Avondale Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119294
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	379771
Inspection dates	6–7 March 2012
Lead inspector	Geoffrey Yates

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	389
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Bentley
Headteacher	John Hodkinson
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2007
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Introduction

Inspection team

Geoffrey Yates

Steven Hill

John Shutt

Additional inspector

Additional inspector

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspection team visited 26 lessons, observing 17 teachers. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders teaching staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and groups of pupils. The inspectors also heard 12 pupils read. There were no responses to the on line questionnaire (Parent View) to take account of in planning the inspection. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at minutes of governing body meetings, the systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress, safeguarding procedures, pupils' work and teachers' planning and marking. Inspectors took account of questionnaires completed by 94 parents and carers and those completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

Avondale Primary School is an above average sized primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are no pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The percentage of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is similar to that seen nationally. The school has achieved a number of awards including the International Schools' award. The school meets the current floor standard.

There is on site after school provision for pupils which is not managed by the school. This provision is subject to a separate Ofsted inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
 Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. Under the strong leadership of the headteacher the school promotes pupils’ learning successfully and serves its community well. It is not an outstanding school because teaching is good overall rather than outstanding and recent improvements in the pupils’ reading skills have yet to impact fully on raising attainment in reading. Comments such as, ‘Avondale is a very happy school which in my opinion ticks all the boxes,’ confirm parents’ and carers’ very positive views of the school.
- Pupils make good progress overall and achievement is good. Children achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage from starting points which are below those expected for their age. By the end of Year 6, pupils’ attainment is broadly average in English and mathematics but it is higher in writing than in reading.
- The quality of teaching is good with examples of outstanding practice. Where teaching is outstanding, lessons move at a very fast pace and teachers are highly effective in ensuring that pupils know exactly what they need to do and how to do it. In classes where teaching is highly effective, marking provides pupils with clear information about how to improve their work. However, this high quality is not yet consistent throughout the school.
- Pupils’ behaviour is outstanding. Incidents of bullying or racial harassment are few and far between and dealt with exceedingly well. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in various situations, including when using the internet.
- Leadership and management are good. The clear focus on pupils’ academic and personal needs and on having systems to evaluate the school’s work are essential components in ensuring pupils enjoy all aspects of school life and are well prepared for the future. The monitoring of teaching is well established but opportunities are sometimes missed to use the outcomes to best effect.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in reading by:
 - developing further a more structured approach to the teaching of reading skills
 - ensuring pupils use and apply the skills they are taught.
- Raise the overall quality teaching to outstanding so that pupils make consistently rapid progress by:
 - ensuring that all lessons move at a fast pace
 - ensuring that, throughout the lessons, pupils know exactly what they need to do and are challenged to do their very best
 - ensuring that marking is effective
 - using the outcomes from the monitoring of teaching to pinpoint what teachers need to do to improve their teaching skills further.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

The parents' and carers' responses in the questionnaires show that they are of the view that children make good progress and this reflects the inspection findings. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Good assessment procedures, which have improved since the last inspection, and the strong focus placed on the promotion of children's early language experiences mean that children are increasingly well prepared for their future learning by time they start Year 1. For example, the story entitled *The Naughty Bus* was used very well to promote a wealth of valuable learning experiences in both classes, with children keen to talk about events in the story, to create models and to write letters, demonstrating tremendous enthusiasm for the tasks.

Pupils of all abilities make good progress through the rest of the school but progress in reading, while now good, has been variable in recent years. As a result of recent improvements in the teaching of reading, attainment in this area is now broadly average by the end of Year 2, but it is below pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics. By the time pupils leave Year 6, attainment is broadly average in English, including reading, and mathematics. All pupils respond well to the tasks set. For example, in a lesson in Key Stage 2 pupils made especially good progress in developing skills linked to journalistic writing. Pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school because they receive good quality support and lessons are well planned to match work closely to their identified needs.

Pupils listen attentively to their teachers and their peers and speak well in response to carefully framed questions. They take a pride in their work. They often write meaningfully at length, although sometimes opportunities are missed to practise and improve their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. The pupils work well collaboratively in group activities and make good use of opportunities for discussion in pairs to air their views and deepen their understanding. For example, during the inspection pupils were keen to talk about how they would deal with a dilemma, or whether you should judge someone by what they look like. Pupils increasingly take responsibility for managing and improving their own work. However, in some instances, marking is not precise enough for them to do that.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers report that the overall quality of teaching is good. Inspection evidence shows good teaching in all classes, with outstanding practice in some. Good or better teaching contributes greatly to pupils' outstanding behaviour and highly positive attitudes to their learning. Teaching assistants provide effective support. Planning ensures that pupils develop their previous knowledge, skills and understanding over a range of lessons. The way the curriculum is taught ensures pupils' own interests are linked well into the chosen topics, with plenty of opportunities provided for them to discuss their ideas. The reorganised system for teaching the sounds that letters make and word decoding skills is leading to pupils' improved progress in reading because the teaching is precisely focused on key skills. However, the full impact of these improvements has yet to be seen. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teaching is consistently good and sometimes outstanding. A range of engaging activities captures children's imagination, allows them to investigate for themselves and moves their learning on quickly. The small outside area places some restrictions on what can be accomplished but, nevertheless, is used effectively to support children's learning.

In the very best lessons, teachers make learning highly stimulating. For example, Year 6 pupils not only researched and learned about what it was like to be without fresh fruit and vegetables in the Second World War but also responded very well to the challenge to plan and plant potatoes in the school grounds, just as pupils at school during the war had to do. In the very best lessons no time is lost; pupils know exactly what they will learn and how they will know if they have succeeded. Work is well matched to the needs of all learners with swift intervention from teachers if pupils find the work too easy or too challenging. Where teaching is not as strong, but nevertheless good, opportunities are sometimes missed to intervene when pupils need help and the pace of lessons slows at times resulting in pupils not completing the tasks set. Teachers employ information and communication technology (ICT) well to engage pupils. Throughout the school, lessons provide plenty of opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Relationships are very strong and teachers and teaching assistants interact well with pupils to support them in their learning. Marking is completed regularly and is used well to tell pupils how successful they have been in specific tasks. However, there is some variability in the use of comments to help pupils improve their work in subjects other than literacy or to indicate how to take the next steps in their learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils say they enjoy greatly everything about 'our' school. Those who attend the well organised breakfast club say how much they enjoy it, despite having to get up early! From an early age, children develop excellent social skills and highly positive attitudes to learning. These qualities are maintained throughout the school. Pupils are polite and respectful. They take a great pride in their work as shown in the care taken to present it well. Parents and carers say that the school is a very safe place and that, overall, there is a good standard of behaviour at the school. Exemplary behaviour was evident in many lessons observed during the inspection and around the school. When talking with inspectors, pupils said that they feel very safe and that bullying in any form is not a problem because it is dealt with effectively. The school's Worry Box scheme is much appreciated by pupils. Younger pupils know that School Leaders and other pupils, as well as the teachers and other adults in school, will help with any problems if they arise. A member of staff who works closely with pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable, others with emotional needs, and

with parents and carers, carries out her duties outstandingly well. As a result, obstacles to learning are addressed well and pupils make good progress from their starting points. Pupils particularly appreciate the praise system with the 'star of the week award', prized by all pupils who are chosen to receive it, which encourages them to achieve well, work hard and develop teamwork and social skills. Attendance is above average. The school council works very hard on behalf of other pupils. Its members are particularly proud that their classmates have chosen them to take on responsibility.

Leadership and management

The very well respected and highly experienced headteacher provides a strong direction and sets a positive example because the needs of the pupils are uppermost in everything he does. Under his leadership, with the strong support of the senior leadership team, the school provides a highly positive and caring learning environment. The leadership and management of teaching and learning is good but some written evaluations of teaching lack clarity in terms of what teachers need to do to improve further. Major improvements to an ageing building have ensured that pupils have a very good indoor environment in which to work. The school has a good capacity to improve. It has an accurate view of its provision. All staff, including teaching assistants, are enthusiastic and skilful in leading the development of many aspects of provision. The governing body carries out its duties well. The quality of provision, including teaching, and pupils' achievement, have improved since the last inspection and these aspects are well placed to continue to develop. For example, provision for pupils' cultural development, an issue at the last inspection, is now of a good quality. The school's arrangements for safeguarding, including the checking of staff's suitability to work with children, meet statutory requirements. The leadership team ensures that equality and awareness of diversity are promoted very well. As a result, for example, the work done to improve boys' attainment in writing now means that boys' achieve well in their writing skills.

The curriculum is good. The Early Years Foundation Stage provides a positive learning environment with well planned activities for children to select for themselves. Across the school, teachers make good use of projects and interventions to enhance the curriculum. The school has a strong and successful commitment to physical education and the arts and this is evident in the enjoyment shown by Year 4 pupils, all of whom are learning to play brass instruments. Leaders and managers play a crucial role in promoting pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by consistently reinforcing the importance of this aspect of provision through assemblies and lessons.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



8 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Avondale Primary School, Darwen, BB3 1NN

Thank you for the very friendly welcome that you gave the team when we inspected your school recently. It was wonderful to see you enjoying your lessons so much. We really enjoyed our visit, especially talking with you. The pupils we spoke were superb ambassadors for your school. The inspectors agree with your school that you receive a good education and that you achieve well. Older pupils told us how much they enjoyed being school leaders and how proud they were to wear the blue sweat-shirts. It was an absolute delight to see how outstandingly well you behave, not just in lessons but around the school.

We agree with you that everyone who works in the school takes very good care of you. You work hard in lessons and are very polite. You told us that you feel very safe in school and you know a great deal about how to stay safe.

We have asked your school to make sure that it builds on the improvements already made in improving your reading skills so that you make even better progress. You can help your teachers by remembering to use the reading skills you are being taught when faced with words or a text that is difficult to understand. There is currently good teaching throughout your school with some that is outstanding. We want your school to do all it can to make all teaching outstanding so that the progress you make is rapid rather than good. You can help by making sure you take full notice of all that is said in lessons and by always trying your very best with your work.

We hope you keep on working hard so you can continue to play a big part in trying to make your school even better. Also, keep up your good attendance record!

Yours sincerely

Geoffrey Yates
Lead inspector

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