

Cobbs Brow School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119329
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	358535
Inspection dates	20–21 October 2010
Reporting inspector	David Byrne

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	252
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Cullen
Headteacher	Mrs A Hirst
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 21 lessons, which were taught by 10 teachers. Observations were made of the school's work. Meetings were held with pupils, staff and a selection of governors. The inspectors looked at a variety of school documentation. This included the procedures for maintaining safeguarding and child protection, the data on pupils' progress, the school development plan, information about governance, documents relating to the management of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and also to community cohesion. The team analysed the questionnaires returned by 113 parents and carers and also those supplied by pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- The progress of pupils particularly in Key Stage 2 to determine whether teaching is challenging and achievement is sufficient.
- The use of assessment to raise pupils' attainment and achievement.
- The impact of the curriculum on meeting the needs of all pupils and in particular boys and more-able pupils.
- The quality of leadership, management and governance in evaluating the school and implementing strategies for improvement.

Information about the school

This is a broadly average sized primary school. The vast majority of pupils are White British. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average as is the percentage identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has attained Healthy School's status and the information and communication technology (ICT) mark accreditation.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It has outstanding features in relation to aspects of pupils' personal development and elements of leadership and management. The large majority of parents are very satisfied with the school and pupils say they feel exceedingly safe, secure and valued. These are important factors why pupils' behaviour is exemplary and excellent relationships exist throughout the school. By the end of Year 6, pupils develop into mature young citizens with an advanced understanding of how to live safe and healthy lives.

From mostly below average starting points to the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils make good progress and typically leave Year 6 with average attainment. Changes to teaching and adaptations to the curriculum have resulted in an acceleration of progress in recent years. As a result, attainment is rising and an increasing proportion of pupils are attaining or exceeding expectations for their age. Pupils are articulate and their good vocabulary is increasingly being harnessed to produce good readers and mostly good writers with excellently presented work. Girls tend to do better than boys, in particular in writing, although effective strategies are being taken to narrow the gap by accelerating boys' attainment in writing. The outcomes have yet to be fully seen. In mathematics, progress is slightly slower and attainment has typically been lower than in English because the more able are not always sufficiently well challenged.

Good, and at times outstanding, teaching enables pupils to learn at a good rate. The curriculum excites and inspires learning and is enriched by many clubs and productive links with the community. Recent adaptations to planning are in the early stages of widening opportunities for pupils to be creative in their application of literacy and numeracy skills to a variety of different contexts. A positive impact on attainment has yet to be fully seen. Although pupils understand their own culture, opportunities for them to develop an understanding of the world beyond their own are more limited which makes the overall contribution to community cohesion satisfactory.

The school is well led and managed. A high quality environment, both indoors and out, is provided which promotes a vibrant place for learning. A caring ethos permeates all that goes on and is supported by outstanding levels of safeguarding and excellent partnerships with others. Staff have a mostly accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses which inform actions for improvement. The school has improved since the last inspection. Good governance, effective administration and astute management of resources combine with the good leadership to give the school a good capacity to improve in the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure attainment in English and mathematics is consistently good by the end of Key Stage 2 by:

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- establishing strategies to develop pupils' creativity in applying their literacy and numeracy skills to a wide range of contexts
 - improve the attainment of boys in particular in writing to narrow the gap between the performance of boys and girls
 - devising strategies to consistently challenge the more-able pupils in mathematics.
- Improve the school's contribution to community cohesion by:
- devising and implementing a strategy that extends pupils' knowledge and understanding of backgrounds and cultures beyond their own.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils enjoy school and thrive on lessons which are usually challenging and demanding. During a Year 5 and 6 science lesson, the pupils' minds worked hard as they grappled with exploring the difference between force, mass and weight as part of an investigation. When challenged, pupils respond with vigour and determination to establish their own predictions and set about to prove or disprove them. Achievement and enjoyment are good. By the end of Year 2, very effective teaching has raised attainment to above average in 2010 and this improving picture is moving through the school. A legacy of underachievement in Years 3 and 4 has been removed and attainment has risen in Year 5 and 6 as a result. The national assessments in 2010, yet to be validated, show that attainment was above average with a particular strength in English. Pupils' progress in mathematics, although good overall, is slower than in English. Strategies to improve the performance of boys are beginning to have a positive impact. Interventions such as 'Every Child a Reader' and 'Reading Recovery' are helping pupils to do better and adaptations to the curriculum are making writing more attractive to all pupils, and, in particular, boys. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from good support and make good progress towards their individual targets. The more-able pupils generally do well, although in mathematics, expectations are insufficiently high in some classes in order to enable pupils to do as well as possible.

Pupils' behaviour is outstanding which enables pupils' learning to be uninterrupted in lessons and for pupils to play safely outdoors. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to be safe and of the choices required for healthy living. Those taking school lunches benefit from healthy balanced meals and the vast majority of pupils eat sensibly and like being active at school. Opportunities for regular exercise are encouraged through initiatives such as 'Walk to School Wednesdays', sports events and physical activities during play, for example, the playground disco.

Pupils are very community minded. They willingly help others and take on roles such as playground leaders very seriously. Pupils are active in supporting those in need for example by participating in national charity events. Although pupils have good levels of spiritual, moral and social development and a good understanding of local culture, their awareness of cultures other than their own is a weakness. The pupils' ability to take on responsibility and work as team members, coupled with good skills of information, and communication technology (ICT) prepares them well for the next stage of their education.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good with many examples of outstanding practice in both key stages. Teachers are excellent role models for pupils, they use ICT very well to support teaching. Expectations for handwriting and presentation are extremely high. Consequently, pupils tend to display high levels of motivation and enjoyment and the quality of presentation of work in their books is exemplary. This adds to the pupils' sense of pride and achievement in their work. Great attention is given to creating high quality displays in classrooms and around school which reinforces high standards. Teaching in Key Stage 2 has improved markedly since the previous inspection and, consequently, pupils now make good progress from Year 3 onwards. In the very best lessons pupils' independence in learning was facilitated by excellent guidance. For example in a Year 5/6 English lesson about how to open a 'disaster' story to hold the attention of the reader, pupils were able to devise and use a range of stimulating words to capture the imagination and create a feeling of anticipation. The extent and accuracy of assessment is good and the monitoring of pupils' progress is regular and a matter of routine. Marking is very helpful and pupils understand how well they are doing and how they can improve.

The curriculum places a high priority on developing the pupils' personal and emotional growth as well as academic achievement. It is enhanced by an excellent range of clubs and activities that extends learning beyond lessons. Good attention given to developing English, mathematics and ICT is used very effectively to enhance learning. Recent

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improvements in the way subjects are planned are improving opportunities for pupils to extend their learning by applying skills to a wide variety of contexts. Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with particular talents and skills are enabled to extend these through links with other schools.

Pastoral care is good at raising pupils' self-esteem and confidence – an essential element of the ethos of the school. Pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from good quality support which is focused on their individual needs. Strong links with local high schools ensure pupils are prepared effectively for secondary education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school is well led and managed and promotes good outcomes for pupils. A strong staff team has been created which share in the same ambition to continually improve and provide the best possible education. Leaders and managers monitor the school well and know each individual very well. Data are gathered and analysed to inform development planning. Leaders are committed to promoting equality of opportunity and removing any acts of discrimination. Where any differences occur, effective actions are taken to remove them, for example in narrowing the gap in the performance of boys and girls in writing.

The governing body discharges its duties very effectively. It is involved in evaluating the school and setting targets for its performance. Excellent procedures are established to ensure outstanding levels of safeguarding and child protection. All reasonable risks are removed and rigorous procedures adopted to keep pupils and adults safe. Governors ensure that resources are used wisely to get good value from the school's income.

Partnerships with others have an excellent impact on the education and lives of pupils. Links with other primary schools, contributions from specialist support staff for example, speech and language therapists and partnerships with members of local commerce such as banks adds much to the life and work of the school. Parents are supportive of the school and their opinions are generally regarded in decision making. Information regarding events in school and the progress of pupils is well organised and of a good quality. The school is committed to promoting community cohesion within the school and its immediate locality. It is not yet doing enough to promote community cohesion in the wider United Kingdom and beyond.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Following a very effective induction into their new surroundings, children settle down quickly and are soon working and playing very well with and engaging enthusiastically in all the activities that the Early Years Foundation Stage provides. Children make good progress in all areas of learning, achieve well and show high levels of curiosity about the world around them, for example, when they explore how to make bread as part of their Harvest studies.

Direct teaching of good quality, strong support from teaching assistants and good use of resources, motivate children to explore a wide range of activities provided for them. The outdoor space provides for all areas of the curriculum and children have many opportunities to explore, for example, the mud after the rain and making a scarecrow to keep the birds from eating the seeds.

Leadership and management ensure that the welfare of each child is at the heart of all that happens. Regular monitoring leads to an accurate evaluation of performance, although some aspects of assessment and recording are underdeveloped. Good links with a variety of outside agencies for the benefit of the children and parents and carers speak very positively of home–school communication and of what the setting provides for their children. Very effective systems are in place to ease the transfer into Year 1.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Just over half of parents and carers returned their questionnaires. The vast majority of these agree that their children enjoy school and virtually all parents and carers are entirely happy with their children's experience at Cobbs Brow. Moreover, the vast majority are of the opinion that the school helps their children have a healthy lifestyle and some talk of what they describe as a 'family atmosphere' that pervades the school. The inspection endorses these positive views. A very small minority expressed concerns about how the school communicates with them. A small minority, too, does not believe the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns. Inspectors found no evidence during the inspection to support these views and judge that the school's partnership with parents and carers is good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cobbs Brow School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 113 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 252 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	91	81	21	19	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	90	80	23	20	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	64	57	47	42	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	75	66	37	33	0	0	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	80	71	31	27	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	70	62	40	35	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	73	65	37	33	2	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	78	69	30	27	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	73	65	38	34	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	61	54	47	42	3	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	61	54	44	39	5	4	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	81	72	29	26	1	1	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	92	81	19	17	0	0	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



22 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cobbs Brow School, Skelmersdale, WN8 6SU

Thank you for sharing so much with myself and my fellow inspectors during our recent visit to your school. Your school is good. It has some outstanding features. One of the major strengths is you! Your behaviour and care for others are exemplary. We were all impressed by how hard you work in lessons and try hard to do your best. You have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy and willingly take on various jobs in and around school to help others.

You benefit from caring and dedicated teachers who work hard to make lessons lively and interesting. Consequently, you learn well and your progress in lessons is good. Your attainment has been average overall but much of the work in your books is exceptionally well presented and neat. This pride in your work helps you to grow as people. Your headteacher and deputy headteacher work with the other teachers and adults to keep you very safe and to constantly seek ways of improving the school. Your views are always welcome and useful to them.

It is part of my job to see what improvements need to be made. I have asked the school to continue to help you with your writing and to give those of you who find mathematics easy, work that is harder. I have also suggested that your skills of reading, writing and mathematics are more often learnt alongside other subjects not just in lessons in English and mathematics. One final area for improvement is to increase your knowledge of the lives of people from different cultures than your own.

I wish you all the best for your future and hope that you continue to work hard, show care for others and enjoy learning.

Yours sincerely

Mr David Byrne

Lead inspector

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