

Lower Darwen Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119120
Local Authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	339355
Inspection dates	24–25 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Sue Sharkey

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	279
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bob Simpson
Headteacher	Mr Steven Cumbo
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons and observed 12 teachers. Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, pupils, representatives of the governing body and staff. The inspectors observed pupils' work and looked at the school's systems for tracking pupils' progress, safeguarding documents and key policies. Inspection questionnaires from 91 parents and carers, 23 school staff and 144 pupils were also taken into account.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether more-able pupils are sufficiently challenged through assessment in lessons.
- Whether actions taken to improve writing are already beginning to improve pupils' progress.
- The effectiveness of the monitoring carried out by leaders on the school's performance.
- How effectively the school uses tracking and assessment of pupils' performance to identify areas of strength and weaknesses to provide challenge and support for learning.
- Whether planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage enables full use of both the indoor and outdoor environment.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. Most children are from White British backgrounds but a small number speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. The school has a hearing impaired unit which serves the local and wider community. There have been unexpected changes in staffing over the last year and a new headteacher was appointed in June 2010. The school holds a number of awards, which include the International School Award.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Lower Darwen Primary School provides a satisfactory education. The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development and this is reflected in the good behaviour, confidence and politeness shown by pupils. Pupils have positive attitudes and their enjoyment of learning is a key factor in their above average attendance. The school is now enjoying a period of stability following unexpected changes in leadership and staffing. The new headteacher has quickly settled into his new role and is well supported by staff and the governing body. Parents and carers are positive in their views about the school's work, a typical comment being, 'I am happy with all aspects of the school and find that my children are now both learning and thriving. I am proud to say that they attend Lower Darwen Primary School.'

Children enjoy learning from the time they start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where they are nurtured and cared for in a safe environment and make good progress. Indoor provision for young children is good but the quality of facilities and resources in the outdoor area restrict children's learning experiences. Over recent years attainment in the school has fallen and is now broadly average in English and mathematics reflecting satisfactory achievement and progress across Key Stage 1 and 2.

Teaching is regularly monitored but, as yet, not all teaching is consistently better than satisfactory. Lessons are well planned to make them interesting and with good quality resources. However, sometimes tasks lack sufficient challenge to extend the most-able pupils. The use of assessment to help pupils make the next steps in learning is inconsistent across classes. Individual targets for pupils are not always challenging or purposeful enough, nor does the marking of pupils work always help them know how to improve their learning. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers and play an important role in supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, ensuring they achieve as well as others in the class.

The curriculum is satisfactory; it is suitably broad and balanced and engages pupils' interest. Subject leaders are making changes in their curriculum planning in order to integrate English, maths and science into other subject areas. Pupils take an active part in helping others, including regularly raising funds to support a wide range of charities. The school has links to a number of schools in Europe and the teaching of French or Spanish throughout the school has added relevance.

The headteacher is developing leadership and management roles but, as yet, there are not clear enough guidelines for all leaders to carry out their responsibilities robustly. The school's links with parents and carers are good. Parents and carers appreciate the school's provision of the well-run breakfast and after-school clubs. The school's evaluation of its own performance is accurate, enabling leaders to plan effectively for improvement. The headteacher has put in place a number of systems to raise standards, including a well-

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informed school development plan, with effective detail for monitoring and evaluation. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and improve achievement, particularly in English by:
 - ensuring the most-able pupils are sufficiently challenged in order for them to achieve high levels
 - ensuring that regular individual targets set for pupils are always challenging and focused
 - ensuring that marking consistently helps pupils know how to improve their work.
- Improve outdoor learning experiences for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by improving the quality of facilities and resources of the outdoor area.
- Improve leadership roles at all levels throughout the school by ensuring that there are clear roles and responsibilities.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted Inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Overall, pupils enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills expected for their age and make good progress in the Reception class. Although there is evidence of good learning in a number of classes, pupils' overall progress through Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory rather than good. By the time they leave school in Year 6, pupil's attainment is broadly in line with the national average. Pupils, for whom English is an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress because support for them is readily available. Pupils who access the hearing impaired unit make good progress and their needs are well met.

As a result of decisive leadership, new initiatives and improved assessment procedures are now used. The school has recently introduced a range of strategies to raise pupils' achievement, particularly in writing. It is too early yet to see the full impact of these but there are indications that some of these are beginning to be successful. Pupils say they enjoy lessons because they are fun. This was evident in a Year 4 and Year 5 lesson where pupils were writing a play based on the Three Little Pigs. The teacher used a glove puppet of the wolf to show how different styles of speaking reflected a range of feelings. The pupils responded well, were highly motivated and stimulated to write. In another class, Year 5 and Year 6 pupils were eager to work when they were developing confidence with multiplication of two and three digit numbers.

Pupils say they feel safe and secure. They report that adults care for them and will always help them. Pupils also value their friendships and say that when playing outside they care for each other. Pupils are developing a good awareness of the importance of being healthy. From an early age, pupils know how to eat healthily and they appreciate the many opportunities they have to take part in fitness activities such as street dance and basketball. Pupils participate keenly in the school council and are proud of the important

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role they play in helping the school to improve. Pupils take their roles and responsibilities in school very seriously. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

Teachers know pupils well and the good support of teaching assistants means that adults often work effectively with pupils in small groups. Where teaching is good, as seen during the inspection, good pace motivates and engages pupils well, teachers' expectations are high and discussions are lively. Planning is effective but work set for potentially high attaining pupils is not sufficiently challenging. Pupils work well together, particularly in pairs, and also independently. Relationships in all classes are good and pupils generally want to do well. Good use is made of assessment information to identify underperformance and to track pupil's progress towards their end of year targets, however, short term targets set for pupils are not always sharp or challenging enough to improve learning. Marking, while up to date, varies in quality and does not consistently help pupils to know how to improve.

The curriculum satisfactorily meets the needs of most pupils. Information and communication technology skills are well taught, but pupils do not have enough opportunities to use these skills on a regular basis in the classroom to promote independent learning. Visits compliment classroom work and Years 5 and 6 pupils take part in residential visits. Such activities help to raise pupils' awareness of different people's

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needs and life experiences, helping to ensure that they are soundly equipped for their future life.

The good care that pupils receive is reflected in the way adults respond to pupil's worries and cater for their minor incidents around school and in the playground. The school is aware that improved guidance and support are needed to ensure that the learning needs of all groups of pupils are well met. The school works with a range of agencies to support pupils, including those with additional learning needs. Good links are made with families when children start school but the transition for Year 6 entering secondary school is less effective.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The new headteacher has a clear vision for improvement, which is shared with staff to raise standards and move the school forward. He has already implemented effective procedures to evaluate the school, to improve provision and to raise attainment and achievement. He is now embedding ambition and drive throughout all areas of the school. His open approach is appreciated by staff, parents and the governing body. Systems for tracking pupils' progress are in place and the assistant headteacher ensures that this is regularly monitored and used by teachers to inform their planning of lessons. There are a number of leadership and management roles within the school, but, as yet, not all have clear guidelines to enable leaders to carry out their strategic roles rigorously.

The governing body challenges school leaders appropriately and is aware that pupils' attainment and achievement are a high priority. They ensure child protection and safeguarding procedures meet requirements. The school's success in extending pupils' awareness of other beliefs and ways of life shows good community cohesion. Global awareness is good and has been built upon by the International School Award. Provision to secure equal opportunities for pupils is satisfactory and the school has effective systems in place for tackling any form of discrimination. The school recognises that there is more to be done to ensure that more-able pupils achieve as well as they should. The school has good relationships with parents and carers. It provides satisfactory value for money.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and gives children a good start to their personal, social and emotional development. Good links with parents help children to settle quickly and confidently into school life and provide a boost to their learning at this early stage. Children enjoy their Reception Year, sharing space and resources in their secure setting where they behave well and make good progress. They enter the Reception class with skills and understanding that are often in line with what is expected for their age. Children learn how to play together and socialise quickly, establishing a politeness and courtesy that leads to purposeful relationships with adults and other children. By the time they reach Year 1, children have reached the levels expected for their age and many have exceeded them, although few reach the higher levels.

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good, ensuring that planning reflects an understanding of how young children learn. Children are able to use both indoors and outdoors but at present, the outdoor area does not replicate the quality of activities available indoors. As a result, there are fewer opportunities for children to enjoy a wide range of experiences. Children are well taught and good use is made of assessment in helping identify what children need to do next. There is a good balance between activities led by teachers and those initiated by children.

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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

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire are positive about the way the school cares for and educates their children. They feel that their children enjoy school, are kept safe and are pleased with their children's progress. Some took time to add comments to the questionnaire they returned, many to reinforce the strength of their positive views, which inspection findings support.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lower Darwen Primary 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 91 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 279 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	64	70	27	30	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	63	69	26	29	1	1	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	48	53	39	43	4	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	47	46	51	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	50	55	41	45	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	51	45	49	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	56	62	34	37	1	1	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)	34	37	49	54	4	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	42	50	55	3	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	41	45	46	51	1	1	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	36	47	52	3	3	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	44	48	45	49	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	51	56	37	41	2	2	0	0

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.



26 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lower Darwen Primary School, Darwen, BB3 0RB

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you and watching you learn in lessons. We were pleased with how well you understand the importance of keeping healthy. We thought your behaviour was also good and congratulate you for raising money for various charities. Overall, we found that your school provides you with a satisfactory education and that your headteacher and school staff are making changes to the curriculum to help you learn more.

There are some things that we have asked the school to do to help to make it better.

First, for teachers to challenge you more in lessons so that some of you can achieve higher levels in English and mathematics. Second, I have asked teachers to mark your work differently so that they can add comments that will help you to know what you need to learn next. Third, to ensure that the targets you have to help you improve your work always challenge you and are exactly right for each of you!

We saw that children in the Reception have lots of different activities inside but have asked the school to make the area outside as exciting as inside with lots of different equipment. Your headteacher and teachers have many different jobs to do in school and are very busy but we have asked that they make certain that all those who are leaders and managers have a clear list of everything they should be responsible for.

I am really pleased that you said that you enjoy coming to school. Remember to always do your best and help your teachers. Thank you for helping us and for being so polite.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Sue Sharkey

Lead inspector

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