

Meadowhead Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119122
Local Authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	366106
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Allan Torr HMI

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	268
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Thompson
Headteacher	Mrs Alison Smallridge
Date of previous school inspection	26 May 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. They observed 18 lessons taught by 10 different teachers, two assemblies and some brief teaching sessions with small groups of pupils taught by different teaching assistants. Inspectors met a group of parents, representatives from the governing body and the local authority, a few ex-pupils, who are now in Year 3 at the junior school and a social worker. Inspectors scrutinised the responses in 18 questionnaires completed by staff and 50 completed by parents and carers. They observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including those related to the care and protection of pupils, the school's data about pupils' progress and standards, pupils' work and school reports.

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

- The achievement of different groups of pupils.
- Whether or not the school's care, guidance and support has a good impact on pupils' outcomes.
- The improvement since the previous inspection in amending the curriculum to enable pupils to have a greater understanding of the cultural richness of the United Kingdom.

Information about the school

Meadowhead is a similar size to the average primary school but is relatively large for an infant school. In recent years there have been a higher proportion of boys than average. Almost all pupils are White British but there are a small number of pupils with Irish Traveller and African heritages. A much higher-than-average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. Although the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is around the national average, the proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national average. A few pupils are looked after by the local authority.

Since the last inspection there has been disruption to the school through refurbishment of the building and long-term staff absence. There has also been a significant turnover in teaching staff in addition to a new headteacher in 2007.

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

Meadowhead Infants is a good school and some of its features are outstanding. In particular, adults work impressively with parents and carers and this has a positive impact on pupils' achievement and their readiness to learn. Parents, for example, in discussions and in the questionnaires, strongly agreed that the school helps them to support their child at home and keeps them informed about their child's progress. The school works outstandingly well with partners such as Meadowhead Junior School, a home for senior citizens, a school on the other side of the town with a high proportion of minority-ethnic pupils and local authority agencies, including the social and health services. These have an important and growing impact on pupils' understanding of different cultures and on pupils' development and well-being.

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support which dismantle pupils' barriers to learning. This is particularly successful for key groups of pupils. Pupils looked after by the local authority make good progress and achieve well and some outstandingly because of well-crafted personal support for individuals and a culture of high expectations. This is also the case for pupils with disabilities who also receive high quality support and teaching from adults. This support is aimed precisely at meeting their needs and helping them achieve their potential. One parent commented that the school sees the child first, 'then the disability'. The high quality care, guidance and support was reflected in some comments by parents such as, the school, 'gives children confidence' and it 'makes children proud of themselves as individuals'.

Different groups of pupils make good progress so that by the time they leave Year 2 standards are around average in reading, writing and mathematics. In relation to schools in similar circumstances, pupils' achievement is good. Attainment in writing lags slightly behind other subjects and this, in part, is because pupils' learning is hampered in some classes by the over-use of simple worksheets. This means pupils do not always have the opportunities they could to apply their writing and other skills, for example, in solving problems in different subjects. Some worksheets require pupils to complete easier work than they did earlier in the year. Pupils' learning is also sometimes slowed because, in a few lessons, they spend too much time listening to the teacher and not enough time in discussion or in activities. The large majority of lessons during the inspection were good and a few were outstanding, and this judgement was reflected in the comments made by pupils and in the quality of their work.

The capacity for further improvement and value for money are good. Senior leaders have a very accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses because they have good systems in place to check on teachers' work and the work of the school. Feedback to teachers about their lessons is impressive because it focuses entirely on pupils' learning. Senior leaders have effectively managed and minimised the disruption to

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pupils' learning due to losing and then recruiting a large proportion of staff and due to the redevelopment of the building. They have tackled the point for improvement identified at the previous inspection successfully and have deployed staff, resources and procedures skilfully for the benefit of pupils. This is a delightful school in which to work and to learn. All staff are very willing to take on advice and they view external scrutiny as a learning opportunity.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment further by:
 - - giving pupils more opportunities to use and apply their knowledge and skills in problem-solving activities
 - - extending pupils' writing skills by minimising the use of easy worksheets
 - - enabling subject leaders to have a greater impact on raising standards through team working, monitoring and sharing good practice
 - - ensuring all pupils take a full and active role from the start of the lesson.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and understanding that are below those typical for three- and four-year olds and in some aspects such as social, emotional and language development their skills are low. By the end of Year 2 pupils have made good progress to reach standards that are broadly average. Pupils' skills in some subjects are higher, for example, in art and design and in history. The drawings of hand patterns and old bicycles were particularly impressive as was the work resulting from the Royal Wedding. Pupils with behavioural needs make outstanding progress and pupils with speech and language difficulties achieve well. This is because their needs are identified very early and they receive consistent and frequent guidance in how to improve. Although boys' attainment lags behind girls, in relation to boys in similar schools they achieve very well. All pupils, including those who are known to be eligible to receive free school meals and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress in lessons. This is because they practise and improve the skills they already know and are challenged by adults to pick up new knowledge and understanding. In one excellent mathematics lesson, for example, the teacher realised pupils understood how to count in tens with confidence and so moved them on to applying their knowledge to working with hundreds.

Pupils' attendance is below the national average for primary schools. The school however has worked very well with specific groups, such as Traveller pupils, to successfully raise attendance. Pupils make good progress in their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. They open doors for each other and for adults, and when they meet adults, particularly on VIP Friday, they are respectful, caring and value different contributions. They have opportunities to reflect and to think in well-crafted and effective assemblies. Pupils from minority-ethnic heritages mix, play and learn harmoniously with other pupils. Behaviour in and around school is good and this enables pupils to feel safe, confident and secure. Parents and carers, staff and pupils all agreed that adults deal well with unacceptable behaviour. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and local community. The school council, for example, successfully introduced equipment and break times to help to improve pupils' behaviour further.

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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	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	2
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	3
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 curriculum is well designed to meet pupils' needs and interests. As a result there is a clear progression of skills and expectations in the different subjects and the school has started making plans to refine this further. There is a strong emphasis on practical activities, the experience of visits and visitors in order to make the curriculum relevant, and on stretching pupils' experiences, vocabulary and creativity. Pupils, for example, in art and design made very good representations of paintings by Arcimboldo made out of fruit and vegetables with strategically placed oranges, carrots and courgettes.

Lessons are effective in enabling pupils develop and learn new knowledge and skills. A key strength in all lessons was the positive relationship between pupils and adults. Teachers in the better lessons use visual and practical resources to inspire, motivate and involve pupils throughout the lesson. This means pupils are active in explaining their thinking, calculating, writing, reading and speaking to partners, so no time is lost. Teachers in better lessons monitor the whole class, assess pupils throughout, ask targeted questions to individuals and then change their teaching to stretch and challenge pupils further. In the less strong lessons, pupils were sitting listening to teachers and to each other for too long and the activities did not enable pupils to use or apply their thinking or their skills themselves. Learning in a few classes was hampered by the use of simple worksheets which limited pupils' thinking and the application of their skills.

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Transition arrangements between the pre-schools and the Nursery and between Year 2 and the junior school are efficient and effective. Inspectors spoke to a group of Year 3 pupils who spoke warmly about the good preparation for junior school. The outstanding care, guidance and support are particularly effective with pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. In addition, they are effective in ensuring that pupils known to be eligible for free school meals make good progress and have high aspirations and ambitions for the future. There is a very caring ethos and environment which is obvious as you enter Meadowhead. Adults also demonstrate this caring ethos in their dealings with parents and carers. The school, for example, has the confidence of and works well with families from a Traveller background and warmly welcomes and respects all types of families including those with same-sex parents and carers and those who provide foster places for pupils. As a result all families and pupils feel supported in achieving as well as they can.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

All staff returning a questionnaire agreed they were proud of Meadowhead Infants. They agreed their contribution to the school is valued, they know and are involved in what the school is trying to achieve and they contribute to self-evaluation. They also agreed that the school makes provision for their professional development. Parents, carers and staff agreed the school is well led and managed and this reflects the evidence collected by inspectors. This is no accident. It is as a result of the very effective leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher. After a few years of disruption due to staff turbulence, they are working to build the skills of the school's subject leaders further, to have a greater impact on pupils' achievement through monitoring and through training, coaching and working alongside staff.

Safeguarding is a high priority with all members of staff and governors. There are good systems in place to identify concerns, to protect and care for pupils and to respond to concerns and issues quickly and effectively. Key agencies share information and work together well. The governing body executes its duties well and there are highly skilled and talented members who have a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and know how to support and challenge the school to improve further. They represent the community well. There is a good action plan, policy and audit in place to develop community cohesion. The skilled and knowledgeable leader for community cohesion ensures pupils have a good understanding of their own culture and community in Mill Hill well. She ensures pupils have the chance to mix and learn about most other cultures through VIP Fridays, links with other schools and through a comprehensive range of visits. As a result it is clear there is a greater understanding of the cultural richness of

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the United Kingdom through the school's curriculum. Senior leaders and teachers have worked hard to tackle any form of discrimination. The gap in standards between different groups of pupils has closed in the last two years.

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	1
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. This is because there is a good focus on key priorities such as developing children's emotional and social skills and developing their speech, language and writing skills. The activities focus on these key aspects so Nursery children for example had the chance to write, discuss, draw and to make models of chicks as they hatched from eggs. Questions asked by skilled professionals made children explain, think and extended their vocabulary. Although children remain below average by the time they enter Year 1 in some areas, such as social and emotional skills, they have made good progress from their starting points and the gaps between boys' and girls' attainment and progress are closing strongly. Children with a disability, such as those with a hearing or sight impairment or those with physical needs, are very well supported by adults. Their needs are not only met but are lessened because of the cleverly targeted support. One assistant, for example, used sign language consistently to ensure a child could access all areas of the curriculum and make good progress.

Teaching is good overall but there are some differences in quality. In the better lessons, children are challenged and the tasks are relevant and exciting, such as the 'parking the car' activity. In a very few lessons learning is only satisfactory because there are not many chances for children to work independently and choose for themselves how to complete the activity, and some of the tasks lack a focus that will make children extend their skills. In the better activities children worked independently and in small groups and chose to

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initiate and to continue their learning alongside adults who stretched and developed children's understanding.

Leaders and managers of the Early Years Foundation Stage have established a vibrant and exciting learning environment which is safe, secure and helps to develop children's skills and understanding. Assessments are thorough and time is maximised to work with children, developing their skills and understanding rather than too much time being spent observing. National requirements are met well.

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

Around one in five parents and carers returned a questionnaire which is average for primary schools. In the questionnaires and in discussion with a group of parents and carers it was very clear the school and its staff are held in very high regard. They made comments such as, 'This school was the best decision I ever made.' and 'It is a very caring school.' Parents and carers overwhelmingly agree their child enjoys school and makes enough progress, teaching is good and the school is led and managed effectively. The overwhelming majority said the school informs them about their child's progress, is helping them to support their child's learning and takes account of suggestions and concerns. Inspectors' final judgements reflect these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Meadowhead Infant 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 50 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 268 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	70	13	26	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	66	17	34	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	29	58	21	42	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	62	17	34	2	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	36	72	14	28	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	54	22	44	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	54	22	44	0	0	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)	24	48	25	50	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	62	18	36	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	48	19	38	2	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	48	25	50	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	31	62	19	38	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	68	16	32	0	0	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



16 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Meadowhead Infant School, Blackburn, BB2 4TT

You may remember I came with a team of 'special visitors' to inspect your school. Thank you for your friendliness and for speaking with us about your work and about the school. It was particularly good to work alongside the children in the Nursery as the chicks hatched. We played with the potato heads and made chicks out of play dough. It was also a pleasure to meet the older children in the playground who told me how proud you are of Meadowhead and showed me the Tardis and the allotment. Thank you for showing us your models in the style of Arcimboldo and for letting us watch the bear hunt.

We judged your school to be good and some aspects of what the school does are fabulous, particularly the way in which adults work with your parents and carers, and the way adults care for you and support you.

We have asked the teachers to help you improve your work even more by helping you to be fully involved throughout the whole lesson and by choosing activities that will help you to use your ideas and the facts you know to solve problems. We have also asked the teachers who are in charge of different subjects like history, mathematics and science to think about how they can help you reach higher levels in those subjects.

We thought you behaved well in class and outside, and thought you made good progress in your work. It was a real delight to meet and work with you.

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr

Her Majesty's Inspector

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