

Belthorn Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119289
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	363896
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Sarah Drake

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	153
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tom Small
Headteacher	Janet Cooper
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2008
School address	Belthorn Road Belthorn Blackburn BB1 2NY
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 14 lessons taught by six different teachers over a period of seven hours. For a further two hours they listened to pupils from four different year groups read, and talked with them about their enjoyment of reading. The inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils, and spoke informally with parents and carers. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation related to pupils' progress and school management, including safeguarding. The inspectors also took into account the questionnaire responses provided by 65 pupils, 16 staff and 89 parents and carers.

Information about the school

Belthorn is smaller than the average size primary school. It serves a small village community plus families who live in the surrounding, more urban, areas to the south east of Blackburn. Most pupils are White British; an increasing number belong to a range of different minority ethnic groups, including Traveller families. Few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible to receive a free school meal is well below average. Below average numbers have special educational needs and/or disabilities but the proportion that has a statement of special educational needs is above average.

The school has met government floor targets for the past three years. It holds the Race Equality Charter Mark; National Healthy Schools Status; Bronze Eco award; Royal Horticultural Society award for work in the school garden, and the Financial Management in Schools Standard.

Since the previous inspection, there has been a significant turnover of teaching staff, with some being seconded for extended periods to other schools. Currently, the school has an acting deputy headteacher. The headteacher will be taking up a new post at the end of the current academic year and a new headteacher has been appointed to start in September 2011.

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	2
Teaching	2
Leadership and management	2
Behaviour and safety	1
Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	Yes
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	Yes
Does the school provide value for money?	Yes

Key findings

This good school is held in high regard by parents and carers, and plays a strong role at the heart of the village community. Pupils describe it as, 'an exciting place to be because there's always something going on.' Typical of parents' and carers' comments is that, 'our child has thrived due to the support and encouragement of the school.' Pupils' outstanding behaviour and awareness of safety, together with their above average attendance demonstrate their enjoyment of school. They form very good relationships, show mature empathy for others' needs and help to create a happy, harmonious learning environment.

Fostered by good quality teaching, pupils' positive attitudes to learning ensure that those of all abilities and different ethnicity make equally good progress and achieve well over time. Most children's skills on entry to the Reception class are broadly as expected for their age. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is usually above average in English and mathematics although the small numbers in some year groups lead to variations from year to year.

Good quality leadership and management, including by the governing body, have ensured that the school has attracted increasing numbers of pupils and maintained the strengths identified at the previous inspection. There have been improvements in, for example, the progress that pupils make in writing and the systems to assess and track pupils' skills development as they move through the school. However, frequent changes in staffing have meant that there has been no consistency in the senior leadership team and that the role of subject leaders is underdeveloped. Some individuals carry too many responsibilities to be able to complete them all with the rigour necessary to move the school forward at a faster rate.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the leadership of the school, by:
 - establishing a settled senior leadership team whose members have clear roles and responsibilities
 - increasing the role played by subject leaders in assuring the quality of provision and outcomes in their areas of responsibility.

Main report

Pupils of all ages know that they come to school to learn and demonstrate that they enjoy doing so. In the Reception class, children share fairly and, for example, negotiate amicably over the design of a construction made of bricks. Their social skills develop well so that pupils delight in helping others, carry out tasks safely and sensibly, and are unfailingly polite. Pupils settle well in lessons and comply well with classroom routines. They are eager to volunteer their ideas and they show respect for those of others so that, for example, they make very good use of opportunities to discuss their thinking or to collaborate on a task. Throughout the school pupils take great pride in the presentation of their work. Such positive attitudes ensure that pupils of all ages, including those with special educational needs and those with disabilities, those who are known to be eligible to receive free school meals and those who belong to minority ethnic groups, achieve well.

Attainment levels in reading and mathematics are particular strengths of the school, with Year 6 pupils frequently reaching well above average standards in mathematics. Pupils respond extremely well to teachers' quick-fire questioning, for example, developing confidence in rapid calculation of fractions and percentages. By the end of Reception Year, children's skills are generally above average. The reading skills of Year 1 pupils are above average. They make good use of their knowledge of the links between letters and sounds to decipher new words, as well as illustrations to help their comprehension. Older pupils show a delight in reading and deliberately set themselves challenges, such as to sample books written in different genres. Over half of Year 6 pupils have above average reading skills. Regular reading sessions provide pupils with plenty of opportunities, for example, to write book reviews or diaries, as well as to hone their technical reading skills. Attainment in writing has been closer to average in the past but the school has worked well to improve this. This year, in most year groups, pupils have made even faster progress in writing than in reading or mathematics and there has been a good increase in the proportion of Year 6 pupils writing at the higher Level 5. Opportunities to write at length about, for example, an alien adventure, the Amazon river or how to care for imaginary 'leatheropterix' eggs, clearly capture pupils' interest and lead to some high quality work. Pupils also develop strong skills in information and communication technology (ICT), art and physical education, with the football team recently winning the local championship.

Pupils' good achievement and the pleasure that they take in learning are due to good

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quality teaching with interesting activities that encourage them to concentrate and try hard. Teachers always make the point of the lesson clear to pupils but are not always as clear about the expectations that they have of different groups, particularly the more able. However, many teachers question pupils very skilfully, building on their good knowledge of individuals' abilities to offer them the right levels of challenge and help them think their answers through. Teaching assistants provide good quality support that enables those who find learning more difficult to make good progress alongside their peers, but they are not always used to best effect during the whole-class input at the start of lessons. Teachers make good use of subject specific language, and link subjects together well so that, for example, pupils practise their ICT skills whilst discovering more about Roman soldiers, writing instructions to make a fruit salad or handling data about the population levels of different countries. The best lessons move at an excellent pace, with pupils eagerly engaging in purposeful debate, automatically jotting notes of points they wish to make and listening well to others so that they avoid repeating what has already been said. Pupils say that they find teachers' marking helpful because it provides them with useful pointers for improvement.

Pupils have extremely positive views about the school. They describe it as, 'fun, magnificent, happy and friendly', and say that it provides them with 'opportunities to try things out', for example, through the sporting activities and many after-school clubs, which range from gardening to street dance. Adults act as positive role models and build excellent relationships with pupils, which results in pupils developing a mature awareness of right and wrong. Those of different ages, abilities and ethnicity enjoy each others' company and pupils also enjoy the weekly lunchtime visits of local residents. Links with a school whose pupils have very different ethnic backgrounds effectively promote pupils' awareness of other cultures, including local clog-dancing traditions. Every pupil spoken with is adamant that, although there may be fallings out, bullying does not occur in school. Many parents and carers also commented positively about the absence of bullying and all agree that their children are safe at school. Pupils are very well aware of how to keep themselves safe, for example, when using the internet, and say that they have full confidence in adults to help them should they have any problems. They show consideration when evaluating others' work and genuine pleasure when others succeed. Pupils' outstanding attitudes and behaviour are strengths of the school.

Determined leadership by the headteacher has ensured that the school has moved forward despite staffing upheavals. She is skilled at building on individuals' strengths and is also accurate in identifying areas for improvement. The curriculum has been adapted to reflect more closely pupils' and staff's interests, and systems to track pupils' progress have been greatly improved, with much work undertaken by the acting deputy headteacher. It is now obvious, on a termly basis, which pupils are in danger of falling behind. This information leads to discussion between a senior leader and class teachers, followed by swift action. This year the school has organised more sessions of intensive support for individuals, which are proving effective in helping them to develop their skills at a good rate. In this way it is helping to tackle

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discrimination and break down barriers to learning, providing equality of opportunity for all and reducing the gap between the attainment of pupils who are more likely to be vulnerable and that of pupils nationally.

The school and its governing body are highly ambitious for its pupils. Resources are of good quality, many provided through the generous fund-raising activities of parents and carers, and the accommodation is bright and well maintained. Members of the governing body put their wide range of skills to effective use both in holding the school to account and in ensuring that, for example, secure safeguarding systems are in place. Currently, subject leaders play little part in developing their areas of responsibility. Some are unsure about levels of attainment or the progress of pupils in their subject, and some evaluations of the quality of provision lack rigorous analysis. Staff are supportive of each other and willingly implement agreed systems, such as recent work to improve consistency in marking, which provides the school with the capacity to improve. However, with regular changes in senior leaders, it is hard for whoever is in role to drive forward improvement to achieve its desired conclusion and for the headteacher to avoid becoming involved in too much detail.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Belthorn 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 89 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 153 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	73	82	15	17	0	0	1	1
Q2 My child feels safe at school	79	89	10	11	0	0	0	0
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	68	76	20	22	0	0	0	0
Q4 The school meets my child's particular needs	63	71	25	28	0	0	0	0
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	74	83	14	16	0	0	0	0
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	72	81	17	19	0	0	0	0
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	71	80	18	20	0	0	0	0
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	63	71	23	26	3	3	0	0
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	56	63	21	24	0	0	0	0
Q10 The school helps me to support my child's learning	63	71	24	27	2	2	0	0
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	62	70	26	29	1	1	0	0
Q12 The school is well led and managed	68	76	19	21	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 achievement of all pupils. ■ Behaviour and safety. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The effectiveness of leadership and management. <p>and taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
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.



24 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Belthorn Primary School, Belthorn, Blackburn, BB1 2NY

Thank you for your welcome and politeness to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our time at Belthorn and were pleased when you told us that you do too. We could tell this from your excellent behaviour, above average attendance and very positive attitudes to learning. We were particularly impressed by the care that you take with the presentation of your work – well done! Well done also to your successful sports teams.

Belthorn is a good school which helps you all to make good progress and to achieve well. By the time that you are ready to leave at the end of Year 6, most of you are working at above average levels, with particular strengths in mathematics and reading. Your writing is also coming along well, with many of you making some very good progress this year, because your teachers give you really interesting subjects to write about. Overall, the quality of teaching is good because teachers have good knowledge about the levels that each of you are working at and adapt the work and their questioning accordingly. You also told us that they take good care of you and that, throughout the school, everybody is very friendly. This means that you feel safe and could tell us with absolute certainty that there is no bullying in school. That is very good news.

Your headteacher and members of the governing body have a very good idea about what areas need to be improved and have brought about some good changes, such as providing you with interesting topics and making marking more helpful to you. Over the past eighteen months, there has been quite a turnover of senior leaders which has made it difficult to make even more improvements. We have asked the school to organise a settled senior leadership team and to ensure that all staff take more responsibility for how well you are doing in their subject areas. This letter comes with our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Drake
Lead Inspector

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