

Walverden Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119178
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	363892
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Marie Cordey

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	437
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Philip Berry
Headteacher	Miss Margaret Thacker
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 23 lessons and observed 15 teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including the school's self-evaluation evidence, the school improvement plan and internal and external monitoring reports of the school's work. Inspectors also analysed 44 questionnaires completed by parents and carers and also questionnaires completed by pupils and staff.

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

- How well pupils in all subjects achieve, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- How effective the curriculum and the quality of teaching are in challenging and engaging pupils, and raising their attainment.
- The capacity demonstrated by leaders and managers in sustaining school improvement.

Information about the school

The school is larger than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well-above average. The vast majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, largely of Pakistani heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The number of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language is above average. The school has gained Healthy School status, and the Activemark for its sport provision. The deputy headteacher took up post in January 2011. The governing body manages extended provision in a daily breakfast club. At the time of its last inspection the school was subject to a notice to improve.

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

In accordance with section 13 (5) of The Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

This is a satisfactory school. There are very clear signs that it is improving securely. Good care, guidance and support for pupils are at the core of the school's character. Pupils are looked after well and they receive good care and support which positively promote their personal development. Pupils are proud of their school and their local community. They demonstrate this by taking on a wide range of responsibilities and contributing to the life of the local community with enthusiasm.

Pupils make satisfactory progress which is improving quickly, although their attainment is low by the time they leave school at the end of Year 6. Leaders and the governing body, with the support of the local authority, have rigorously tackled weaknesses in teaching, set more challenging targets and systematically tracked the progress of individual pupils towards meeting these targets. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved and is now good and underpinning the rapidly improving progress. It is enabling pupils to overcome a legacy of low attainment and make much faster progress. Consequently, attainment in Years 3, 4 and 5 has risen significantly and is now on track to be average by the end of Key Stage 2. Attainment in Year 6 has also risen rapidly but overall remains low in this year group because these pupils have had to close the biggest gaps in their learning.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and their attendance has improved significantly. The school's effective strategies and the actions of the family support officer have been instrumental in bringing this about. The clear signs of improvement, together with accurate self-evaluation, demonstrate the school's satisfactory capacity to sustain improvements. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language successfully overcome barriers to their learning and make good progress because of the very effective, focused support they receive. Challenging targets and high expectations of pupils' capabilities are important elements in this rapidly improving school. Although attainment is improving quickly in reading, writing and mathematics it is rising most strongly in reading. There are still some noticeable weaknesses in pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar, and in their problem-solving skills and application of their mathematical knowledge. The school has accurately identified this as a priority for improvement and has put in place robust procedures to bring about the necessary improvement.

Good quality teaching has been the catalyst for change. It is reflected in positive relationships and pupils' much improved enjoyment of learning. Almost all lesson planning is carefully worked out in order to raise pupils' attainment. However, occasionally work is not challenging enough, especially in some classes in Key Stage 1. Opportunities are

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missed, for instance, to engage and challenge some pupils according to their interests and capabilities, and to develop pupils' basic skills of literacy and numeracy in a range of subjects.

Up to 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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment further, especially in writing and mathematics, by:
 - focusing more sharply on improving pupils' basic skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - focusing more on improving pupils' application of mathematical knowledge and their problem-solving skills.
- Make sure that the small amount of satisfactory teaching, especially in some classes in Key Stage 1, is improved so that it is at least good by:
 - making sure the needs of all pupils are suitably met
 - ensuring that the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are a focus in teaching across a range of subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils enjoy lessons most when they are very involved and they have opportunities to think and reflect. This is evident in their enthusiasm for debate and when they challenge each other in 'talking partner' groups. Pupils say that they appreciate lessons where they are challenged to achieve their best possible work. In these lessons, they are completely focused on their learning because of their teachers' high expectations and good subject knowledge. Pupils were engrossed, for example, when they fulfilled their teacher's aim of using high-level mathematical vocabulary to describe measures of length and weight. Pupils become a little restless on the few occasions when there are fewer opportunities to be as involved and the work is less challenging.

Children's starting points to the Early Years Foundation Stage vary but, overall, are well-below expectations for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and most pupils now begin Year 1 at below-average levels, although their written skills are weaker. In Key Stages 1 and 2, attainment has been stubbornly low. However, good teaching is accelerating rapidly the progress pupils make and as a result, attainment is rising securely, particularly in reading. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress because of the sharply focused support they receive in one-to-one lessons and in small groups.

Pupils enjoy the many opportunities they are given to celebrate their own cultural heritage and also to understand the cultures of people from different faiths and backgrounds. Pupils behave well, respect and value others and are generous fund-raisers, reflecting their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They are unfailingly polite and courteous to visitors. Pupils have a good understanding about the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle because it has a sharp focus in the curriculum. The school also provides

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pupils with nutritionally balanced school lunches and a wide variety of physical education activities. The vast majority of pupils feel very safe in school. A very small minority, however, express some concerns about the rough behaviour of a very few pupils that they find unsettling.

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	4
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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
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?

Almost all lessons are carefully planned to meet the needs of the different abilities and interests of pupils in each class. In these lessons the detailed subject knowledge of teachers is used effectively to engage pupils in challenging work. In a literacy lesson, for example, pupils were challenged to think for themselves when analysing the life cycle of animals. Looking after the class hamster provided an insight and gave pupils first-hand experience of animal life. They went on to use information and communication technology (ICT), reference books and poetry to produce well-written and thoughtful accounts. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support pupils in small groups and individually because they use accurate assessment information to plan individual and group support. Occasionally, when the teacher speaks for too long, pupils' engagement in their learning is reduced. Also on occasion, opportunities are missed to develop pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy through other subjects. Most pupils know how to improve their work because of thoughtful and helpful marking but, very occasionally, opportunities are

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missed to ensure that pupils know precisely what they need to do in order to improve their work.

Leaders have concentrated on providing a curriculum that brings learning to life and emphasises the acquisition of basic skills. Pupils' first-hand experiences, their involvement in choosing themes and topics and the teaching of basic skills in ICT are all used very effectively to help improve pupils' basic skills and to improve their work in other subjects. Provision for music and sport, in particular, is strong. Pupils enjoy these lessons very much. A broad range of visits and visitors enrich pupils' knowledge and understanding of a wide range of subjects. There are many activities at lunch times and after school. These are much appreciated by pupils and their parents and carers, whether it is football or rounders. The Sports Development Manager actively promotes pupils' participation in sport, much to their delight.

Pupils' welfare is given a high priority. For example, the school provides a daily breakfast club which gives participating pupils a good start to the day. The school's commitment to the care of pupils is reflected in the well-targeted support for those pupils who, because of their circumstances, are potentially vulnerable, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. Rapid identification of their needs and precise, focused attention by school staff and outside specialists make a significant contribution to their good progress. Despite the larger-than-average size of the school, pupils are known as individuals by staff. Pupils' emotional development and learning are supported well because of good partnerships with outside agencies, such as specialist educational needs services, the local authority and local schools.

Children are well prepared when they begin school life in the Nursery classes. Pupils are then supported well for each new stage in their education. They look forward to going to high school because they have the opportunity to visit their school and meet secondary-age pupils.

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?

Leadership is improving. The strengthened senior leadership team now includes a deputy headteacher who supports the headteacher effectively. Staff are committed and united in their drive to improve pupils' outcomes. The local authority is supporting the school effectively in developing leadership roles. Weaknesses in the quality of teaching have been tackled systematically and successfully because of leaders' tenacity and effective challenge and support. Differences in pupils' attainment in writing, for example, are beginning to

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narrow, reflecting the school's satisfactory commitment to equality of opportunity. Respect for people from all walks of life is developed well because of the school's effective emphasis on tackling discrimination.

Safeguarding arrangements exceed national requirements and the governing body is very active in ensuring it carries out its safeguarding responsibilities. Risk assessments and safeguarding systems are very thorough and regularly reviewed. The family support officer promotes the safeguarding of all pupils and their families well, particularly those whose circumstances may make them particularly vulnerable.

Leaders and managers, including the governing body, have been astute in the use of funds to improve resources. This is most noticeable and effective in the provision for the Nursery classes and for improving ICT resources. The governing body is increasingly challenging the school's performance and becoming more involved in school life.

The good promotion of community cohesion is reflected in the wide contribution to a range of activities, at school, local and international level. The school plays a very active part in the local Community Cohesion Project. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school and are regularly informed about their child's performance. They have been very effective in working with school to improve attendance.

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	2
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children greatly enjoy their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage. A wide range of activities, such as sand and water play, art, ICT and role play, which they enjoy immensely, stimulate their imagination and learning. They are very keen and convincing shopkeepers, doctors and teachers. Teaching is good. Consequently, children make good progress in all aspects of learning and especially in their personal development. Children

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are eager to play outdoors where they make good progress in their learning, particularly in their writing and number skills, and in developing their independence. The range and impact of outdoor activities has improved in Reception classes but, in the Nursery classes, some opportunities are missed to make the most of outdoor-learning opportunities. Four children from the Nursery class were enthralled by pouring water down a pipe and into a container. Their language skills developed as well as their confidence and independence because they were stimulated and challenged by this activity. Not enough children, however, are guided sufficiently to take advantage of such opportunities. The school is aware of the need to develop this further in order to provide children with a broader variety of learning experiences and is taking steps to address the issue. Positive relationships between children and adults reflect the effective team work of all the staff in meeting children's needs.

Leadership and management are good. The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage is knowledgeable and astute. She provides clear direction for a successful setting. Staff work well together and there are very good links with parents and carers, who are very supportive of their children's learning both in school and at home. Children are looked after carefully and welfare requirements are fully met.

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

There was a below-average rate of returned questionnaires when compared to other primary schools. Of those returned, the vast majority of parents and carers were happy with the school's provision and indicated that their child enjoyed school. Almost all agreed that the school helped their children to adopt a healthy lifestyle and inspection findings confirm that pupils are very keen on keeping fit and eating healthily. A small number of parents and carers were concerned about behaviour. Inspectors followed this up carefully during the inspection. Observations of behaviour in classes and around school, and discussions with pupils confirmed that behaviour is good. In addition, a small number of parents and carers were concerned about leadership and management. The newly strengthened senior leadership team is working effectively to secure improvement and to involve parents and carers further.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Walverden 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 44 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 437 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	24	55	19	43	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	50	20	45	2	5	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	20	45	20	45	4	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	52	17	39	3	7	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	22	50	17	39	3	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	36	22	50	4	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	41	24	55	2	5	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)	16	36	22	50	3	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	36	24	55	3	7	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	43	17	39	6	14	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	41	20	45	4	9	2	5
The school is led and managed effectively	19	43	17	39	5	11	3	7
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	52	16	36	3	7	1	2

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.



27 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Walverden Primary School, Nelson, BB9 0TL

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to us when we inspected your school recently. We listened carefully to what you had to say and looked closely at the questionnaires you completed. Thank you, in particular, to the pupils who met with us and to those who showed us around school so happily.

Yours is a satisfactory and improving school and it no longer requires a 'notice to improve'. You are cared for well and you are confident and thoughtful young people. You enjoy learning and your attendance is much better. Your work is also much improved. Well done! Your leaders are united in their determination to improve your school even more.

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are welcomed into school by staff and older pupils and enjoy playing and learning.

You make satisfactory progress in your work. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the good care and support they receive. We have asked your school to concentrate on improving your work in writing and mathematics by concentrating more on improving your spelling, punctuation, grammar and your problem-solving skills. We want you to have more opportunities to develop your skills in literacy and numeracy in a range of subjects. We would like the good teaching you receive to be even better, especially in Key Stage 1, so that each one of you is challenged to achieve your best work.

You can all help by continuing to work hard because we know how eager you are to do your best.

We wish you all the very best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Marie Cordey

Lead inspector

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