

Balshaw Lane Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119312
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	379777
Inspection dates	3–4 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Lynne Read

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	272
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Fielding
Headteacher	Helen Gregson
Date of previous school inspection	07 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons and observed eight teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body, managers, a local authority schools' adviser, staff and groups of pupils. In observing the school's work, the inspectors looked at pupils' workbooks, assessment records, school policies and school development plans. In total 163 parental questionnaires were received, analysed and considered, alongside 118 questionnaires completed by the pupils and 25 by school staff.

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

- Whether the high standards seen over recent years are sustained for the current cohorts of pupils.
- Whether teaching and the curriculum promote the best possible progress, especially for some groups of pupils.
- How effectively the systems for care, guidance and support promote high standards of personal development and support individual needs.

Information about the school

This school is larger than the average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much lower than the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The very large majority of pupils is of White, British heritage. The majority of pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.

The school is accredited with the Activemark, Eco-Schools and International Schools awards and has Healthy School status.

A private provider offers nursery places, as well as before- and after-school care for school-age children. This provision is subject to a separate inspection and report. Recently, there have been several changes to staffing and management. At the time of inspection, two classes were taught by temporary teachers.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Balshaw Lane Primary is an outstanding school that is highly valued by parents and carers. It offers a high standard of care, pupils' attainment is significantly above the national average and all elements of pupils' personal development are outstanding. The headteacher's excellent leadership ensures that her vision of excellence is shared by staff and pupils alike. A highly-skilled and experienced governing body keeps a very close eye on provision and outcomes, taking full consideration of stakeholders' views. Senior leaders have rigorous processes for monitoring and evaluating performance. They use the accurate information that they gather intelligently to plan developments. This successful strategy ensures that outcomes for pupils are maintained at a high level and that issues are addressed swiftly. For example, current assessments by teachers indicate good success for measures introduced this term to boost reading at Key Stage 2 for the more-able. The capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding.

Children make a flying start to their education because of outstanding provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 is good overall and often outstanding for the older pupils. Progress is tracked individually and new class action plans provide intervention strategies to help pupils reach their targets. There are some variations among groups of pupils. Managers analyse rigorously the progress data for some groups, for example that of boys and girls, to check that provision is meeting their needs. However this excellent practice is not extended to groups such as summer born pupils and those who speak English as an additional language. Teaching is good overall; it is often outstanding in upper Key Stage 2 where pupils rise to their teachers' high expectations and relish the challenges presented to them. Staff work very well as a team but there is a need to extend opportunities further for the sharing of outstanding practice. The curriculum is outstanding and includes a rich emphasis on the arts and sport. Pupils' interests are fired by stimulating topic work that links subjects together in an imaginative way and includes a rich variety of visits and extra-curricular clubs. However, the innovative links between subjects, skills teaching and activities are not always explicitly recorded in longer-term planning. This reduces opportunities for the sharing and preservation of outstanding practice.

Behaviour is excellent; harmonious relationships exist between pupils of different ages and backgrounds, and attendance is high. Pupils assert that they feel safe and love coming to school. All age groups relish the many opportunities provided for

them to experience responsibility. For example, the school council plays a significant role in decision-making and pupils often take the initiative in fundraising for charities.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure a more even pattern to learning across groups of pupils and extend the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring that the progress of all groups of pupils is monitored equally rigorously to check continuously that all pupils' needs are being met fully
 - facilitating further the sharing of outstanding teaching
 - ensuring that long-term planning explicitly records the links between subjects, the teaching of skills and activities, so that innovative ideas and outstanding provision can be more easily shared and protected for the future.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning, are keen to succeed and work exceptionally hard. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 made excellent use of imagery in their poems and worked to an excellent standard. In Years 4 and 5, before beginning to write, pupils explored giving and receiving instructions, closely examining the precise language and detail needed. Pupils of all ages enjoy creative work; boys and girls developed and performed a dance sequence based on the 'Thriller' theme, pupils sing beautifully and displays around school illustrate good standards in art and design.

Children make excellent progress in the Reception class and attainment on entry to Year 1 is well above average. Pupils make good progress from this extremely secure foundation. The school has identified some difficulties with spelling because a few pupils are not using their knowledge of letters and sounds to best effect. New planning and setting for lessons is due to be implemented soon. Progress in Key Stage 2 is good overall and inspectors observed exceptionally rapid learning in Years 5 and 6. Attainment is high. Pupils who left the school in July 2011 were over a year ahead of what is expected for their age, with a high proportion working at the higher level in both English and mathematics. Scrutiny of work and observations confirm the school's assessment that the current Year 6 cohort is on track to maintain this impressive record. Achievement for boys and girls is equally outstanding. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and, because of excellent care, guidance and support, many of them achieve the national average.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy living and fitness. They enjoy plenty of exercise and represent their school proudly in competitive sport and tournaments. Behaviour is outstanding; pupils think for themselves and, by Year 6, they display mature, responsible attitudes. Pupils of all ages are adamant that bullying is not tolerated and they are confident that adults are always on hand, should they have any problems. With high academic standards and excellent habits of attendance and punctuality, pupils are extremely well prepared for their future education. Pupils are thoughtful and polite and reflect on the less tangible aspects of

life. Spiritual, moral and social development is a major strength. Pupils' cultural awareness is good; staff and governors are exploring further opportunities for pupils to engage with others from different backgrounds in order to consolidate their understanding of world faiths and diversity.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Relationships are excellent. Pupils trust their teachers and say that learning is fun. Pupils are taught to evaluate their own work, which allows them to recognise their strengths and helps them identify their own learning targets. Some teaching is outstanding, especially for the older pupils when lessons include exacting challenges, an exceptional pace to learning and plentiful opportunities for independent learning. In some lessons across school, however, the pace of learning is satisfactory rather than good or better and the work is over-directed, leaving few opportunities for pupils to make informed decisions. Pupils say they enjoy their homework tasks and they access recommended computer programs in their own time in order to take their learning forward. Teaching assistants have a good range of expertise and are well-deployed to provide additional support and one-to-one tuition.

The curriculum includes excellent opportunities for creative, physical and practical work and is extremely well enhanced through partnerships. For example, pupils have links with a school in Jordan through the 'connected classrooms' project and a creative partnership supports the film project that is highly valued and enjoyed. Pupils especially enjoy their topic work where they are able to consolidate their developing skills. While working on their Second World War topic, for instance, older pupils applied their learning in research, writing, art, design and technology, problem solving and information and communication technology. Theme weeks inject additional excitement to learning and 'team days' allow pupils of different ages to work together. This imaginative, and often innovative, approach has been developed and refined over time but long- and medium-term planning is not always recorded in sufficient detail. This makes it more difficult to share the outstanding practice, for

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

example with new staff, and there is a risk that the excellent work could be lost if talented teachers move on. Pupils take full advantage of an interesting programme of extra-curricular activities that include a wide range of sport, gardening, modern foreign language classes and cookery.

Teachers and governors are highly committed to the principle of inclusion and provide an outstanding quality of care, support and guidance for pupils. Those pupils who take advantage of the school's breakfast club enjoy a good start to the day and a pleasant social experience. Responses to questionnaires from pupils, parents and carers overwhelmingly agree that children are safe. Newly-developed provision maps for pupils who are not meeting their targets record individual needs and show how these are addressed, for example, through intervention strategies. The able, gifted and talented pupils have additional opportunities to extend their particular skills and talents. Excellent care is taken to ensure a smooth transition as pupils move to new classes and to high schools.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, well supported by the senior management team, has a clear overview of provision and learning and demonstrates strong ambition. Very effective systems are in place for critically evaluating the work of the school and to plan improvements. These include regular observations of lessons, checking the quality of pupils' work and tracking individual progress very closely. Managers are now working on injecting more rigour into the monitoring of teaching and learning by further analysis of class data. Although teachers have some opportunities to observe and discuss outstanding practice, there is scope to extend them further. Outcomes for pupils are outstanding, resources are plentiful and of high quality, and the school provides excellent value for money.

There is a great sense of pride and belonging in the school. Staff morale is particularly high and very effective teamwork secures the school's highly supportive and caring ethos. The attention to safeguarding is good. Staff have regular updates in child protection training and are well-equipped to deal with concerns. The school promotes equality of opportunity well. However, monitoring systems do not analyse the performance of all groups of pupils in order to check for emerging patterns that might indicate the need for specific action. Members of the governing body have a very broad range of skills and a thorough knowledge of provision and performance. They ask searching questions and are robust in discharging their statutory responsibilities, ensuring that the views of all stakeholders are considered in any decision they make. Community cohesion has a good profile and governors are exploring ways of enhancing opportunities for pupils to engage more frequently with others from different backgrounds. Links between home and school are excellent and

an active Parents', Teachers' and Friends' Association provides additional funds for school, as well as social events for families and the community.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	1
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	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Very good links with pre-school providers and excellent induction procedures ensure that children settle quickly and their needs are accurately assessed. This assessment continues throughout the year and enables staff to provide extremely effectively for the interests and abilities of all children. As a result, children thoroughly enjoy their work; their behaviour and personal skills are excellent.

Children's development at entry to the Reception class is above what is expected of this age group overall; their speaking and listening and personal and social skills are especially good. Teaching is outstanding. Lessons take account of children's interests in order to keep them well-motivated. For example, work on treasure maps has fired boys' imaginations and inspired them to write. Daily provision includes varied opportunities for children to choose their own activities, indoors and out, and develop independence. For instance, children are encouraged to evaluate their own successes and one was so thrilled with his work that he decided to use the camera to record it. Children make rapid progress. Most are working well above expected levels by the time they enter Year 1. Leadership and management are outstanding and ensure exceptionally high standards of welfare. Exhaustive measures are taken to provide help or resources to meet children's needs, including links with specialist, outside services. Staff are highly skilled and work as a very effective team. Excellent partnerships with parents and carers encourage and support them in playing an active role in their children's education.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers have exceptionally positive views of the school. The vast majority of those who replied to the questionnaire agreed that their children enjoy school and are safe. They especially praise the support and commitment of the staff and feel that their views are considered and valued. Almost all are happy with their children's experience of school. There is commendation for the quality of leadership and management and the good standard of teaching. Quotes include 'there are high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement', 'the school has excellent communication with parents', 'the staff are helpful and lovely' and 'the school provides an interesting curriculum in a warm, but challenging, environment'. Inspection judgements endorse these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Balshaw Lane Community 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 163 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 272 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	105	64	54	33	2	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	117	72	43	26	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	71	44	84	52	5	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	81	50	73	45	7	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	89	55	68	42	3	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	82	50	77	47	4	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	95	58	64	39	3	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	84	52	65	40	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	82	50	75	46	2	1	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	77	47	73	45	3	2	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	67	41	78	48	6	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	90	55	60	37	4	2	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	96	59	64	39	2	1	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 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.



7 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Balshaw Lane Community Primary School, Chorley, PR7 6NS

Thank you for the friendly and warm welcome you gave my colleagues and me when we inspected your school. We thoroughly enjoyed our time with you and appreciated all the help and smiles you gave us.

Balshaw Lane Primary is an outstanding school. You get on extremely well together and take great care of each other. You are a credit to your families and your teachers. We think your class councillors, playground pals and librarians do a wonderful job in helping to run the school.

Thank you to the pupils who filled in their questionnaire and those who chatted with us. We know you are delighted with your school because of comments such as 'teachers give you lots of ideas', 'we are very well supported by our friends and teachers', 'we have good opportunities to work together'.

You are quick to learn, work hard and achieve high standards. You enjoy an exciting curriculum and some outstanding lessons. To make your school even better, we have asked your teachers to share some of their excellent skills with each other and to make sure that they record their planning in detail so that pupils in the future can have as much fun learning as you do. We have also asked them to keep a really close eye on progress for different groups of pupils to make sure that you are all getting the best out of your lessons.

You can all help to keep your school an outstanding one by maintaining your excellent attendance record and continuing to be conscientious in completing your homework. Thank you once again for the interesting conversations we had and for letting us share your work and play. Please accept my best wishes for the future. I hope you all continue to enjoy your exciting school.

Yours sincerely

Lynne Read
Lead inspector

