

Larkholme Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119299
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	382308
Inspection dates	02–03 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Ruth James 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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	250
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Norman Irish
Headteacher	Val Pilkington-Smith
Date of previous school inspection	07 December 2009
School address	Windermere Avenue Fleetwood Lancashire FY7 8QB
Telephone number	01253 874024
Fax number	01253 776048
Email address	head@larkholme.lancs.sch.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



© Crown copyright 2011

Introduction

This inspection was carried out at no notice by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Fifteen lessons were observed and 12 teachers seen. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including school assessment data, the self-evaluation document, documentation relating to safeguarding, and school policies.

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

- The attainment and progress of current pupils, especially in Key Stage 2.
- The quality of teaching in different year groups.
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers in bringing about improvements.
- The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

The school is an average size for a primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and the proportion who speaks a first language other than English is very low. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities who is supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is above average. The proportion who are supported at school action is below average, but increasing. The Early Years Foundation Stage includes Reception age children.

At the time of its last full inspection in December 2009, the school was placed in special measures. This was the fifth monitoring inspection.

There is an on-site nursery, Skylarks Nursery. There is also before- and after-school care. This provision is not managed by the governing body and is subject to a separate inspection.

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(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

With determined and effective leadership, the headteacher has worked hard to ensure that the school has overcome its previous difficulties. Following the recent appointment of a permanent deputy headteacher, capacity to improve has strengthened considerably. The school is now driving forward more rapidly with the necessary improvements and the quality of education is satisfactory. Since the last inspection, teaching has improved and pupils are making more rapid progress. Across the school, standards are broadly average, although there is some variation within and between different year groups, and achievement is satisfactory.

Behaviour is good both in lessons and around the school and pupils' positive attitudes to learning are an important factor in their improving rates of progress. They respond enthusiastically in most lessons and take pride in their work.

Teaching has improved, although it is not yet consistently good across the school. The majority of the lessons observed were good. This ensures that pupils are making at least satisfactory progress. Better attention to individual needs in lessons, and a range of intervention strategies are helping to ensure that pupils who have fallen behind are catching up. The curriculum provides a necessary focus on literacy and numeracy, with opportunities to develop writing skills in other subjects. Examples of skilled teaching were observed in the full range of age groups, and work to spread good practice is beginning to have an impact, especially in upper Key Stage 2. The role of the new deputy headteacher, as a resource for improving and refining teaching and assessment skills, is developing well. Assessment at whole-school level is effective but teachers' skills in adapting their teaching on an ongoing basis do vary, so that the pace with which learning is moved on can vary.

The curriculum has improved, and much work is set in an appropriate context, often based around themes. Opportunities to develop writing skills across the curriculum are well developed, but other links are less clearly defined. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about a number of sports clubs but were keen to see a greater variety of opportunities offered.

Pastoral care is a strength of the school. The learning mentor makes a valuable contribution to the support of pupils with particular needs. Pupils relate well to their peers and other adults and know who to turn to if they have a problem.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher form a strong team. Leadership at other levels is not yet strong enough, so that leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Middle leaders' skills are developing but there have been a number of changes of role recently. Local authority support has been provided for key areas and middle leaders are now beginning to demonstrate the ability to lead without external support, but this is at an early stage. Self-evaluation is systematic and thorough but is largely led by senior leaders.

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 by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Further improve the quality of teaching across the school so that it is consistently good in all classes by:
 - utilising the good practice that exists within the school, sharing expertise and providing coaching by senior staff
 - ensuring that the wealth of assessment data is used effectively by all teachers in planning work to match pupils' needs and move learning on rapidly.
- Further develop the curriculum to ensure that there are good opportunities for making cross-curricular links, and to extend enrichment opportunities.
- Strengthen leadership and management especially at middle leader level to ensure that there is a clear focus on promoting rapid progress in all subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2011 was similar to 2010, and remained a little below average. Although the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 in mathematics improved, fewer reached the higher Level 5. The picture was similar in English. However, the proportion of pupils making the expected progress between the end of Year 2 and Year 6 rose substantially and was above average. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals did particularly well in this respect in English. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is improving well, especially in writing.

Broadly, across the school, rates of progress are improving and are now satisfactory, and, although not yet consistent, they show that the legacy of underachievement is being tackled effectively. The school's current assessment data suggest much improved outcomes by the end of Key Stage 2 for future cohorts. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers.

Lesson observations confirm that learning is improving, but there remain some variation in rates of progress. For example, in upper Key Stage 2, pupils responded enthusiastically as they worked quickly on challenging mathematical problems, showing perseverance and a genuine sense of achievement when they succeeded. Some pupils in lower Key Stage 2 were slower to tackle independent work despite some skilled teacher interventions.

Pupils behave very well and display positive attitudes to learning. Most took an enthusiastic part in most of the lessons observed. The school fosters their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through assemblies and teaching which emphasises respect. At times, teaching encourages personal reflection and a sense of responsibility. Pupils feel well looked after and take care of each other sensitively. They turn confidently to adults in school when upset or worried. Pupils know what they must and must not do to keep themselves safe. Their contribution to the community is satisfactory overall. Pupils are taught about healthy lifestyles and spoke very positively about the variety of extra-curricular sports clubs. In view of their average levels of skill, they are satisfactorily prepared for their economic well-being in the future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection. It is satisfactory overall and many lessons observed were good, but inconsistencies remain both within and between some year groups. The best lessons moved at a rapid pace and developed learning effectively. In such lessons, skilled teaching ensures that no time is wasted, explanations are clear and succinct, and examples move smoothly through increasing levels of difficulty. Work is better suited to individual needs. Teachers are now better at grouping pupils appropriately, for example, in mathematics lessons, and setting work that is suitably challenging. In the Year 6 lessons observed, teachers kept up the pace very well, setting time limits for tasks and making sure that learning moved on rapidly.

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

In less strong lessons weaknesses remain. For example, in some lower Key Stage 2 lessons the plenaries collated work pupils had done independently, but failed to build on this or develop learning further. Time is not always used well, and learning time is sometimes lost, for example, when pupils move from the carpet to their desks and then back again. In the best lessons, teachers are highly alert to any inattention and distractions and deal with it quickly and firmly, but this is not consistent. Occasionally teacher-led introductory sessions are too long and pupils lose interest. Questioning also varies in quality, and although it was sometimes highly effective there were other instances where it was less effective. Weaknesses observed included questioning which failed to build learning sequentially, with closed questions requiring only brief answers asked in somewhat random order without a clear purpose, or questions that did not encourage pupils to think. Occasionally, teachers miss opportunities to reinforce learning, for example, by repeating and explaining longer contributions made by pupils, relying too much on all having heard and understood.

Curricular changes are helping to improve pupils' enjoyment and engagement. More opportunities are being provided for pupils to practise their writing skills through other subjects. A satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities is offered. Information and communication technology provision has been enhanced, for example, through netbooks which are used in class. Cross-curricular links are developing but not yet utilised to full effect.

The welcoming ethos of the school ensures that pupils receive good care, guidance and support. Teachers are sensitive to the needs of their pupils in the classroom. Relationships are very good and pupils spoke warmly about the way adults care for them. Earlier identification of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is ensuring that support strategies are in place to enable them to progress. The newly appointed special educational needs coordinator is working effectively with parents and carers and outside agencies to help pupils to make the best of opportunities offered. The learning mentor and teaching assistants also provide valuable support.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Under the steady and determined leadership of the headteacher the school has improved significantly. The recent appointment of a permanent very capable deputy headteacher provides an opportunity to enhance the focus on improving the quality of teaching, and although at an early stage, the evidence is encouraging. There are raised professional expectations of staff in respect to the quality of their work, and the rates of progress their pupils make. The skills of the headteacher and deputy

headteacher complement each other well. Leadership capacity at other levels is developing. There have been several recent changes in role, including the special educational needs coordinator, and leadership of literacy and the Early Years Foundation Stage. The local authority has provided much effective support and the school has taken full advantage of the advice and guidance offered. A recent questionnaire showed strong parent and carer support for the school from the minority who responded.

The school improvement plan identifies appropriate priorities and clearly shows actions, timescales and responsibilities. Checks on the quality of teaching and learning are carried out regularly and identified weaknesses are acted upon. Pupils' progress is carefully tracked and underachievement tackled. Class teachers are required to plan specifically for those pupils who are not on track to attain their targets and a range of intervention strategies are in place for specific groups and individuals.

The governing body provides appropriate strategic direction. Members of the governing body are maintaining a strong focus on the quality of teaching and outcomes.

Statutory requirements for safeguarding pupils are in place. Promoting equal opportunities is evident because, for example, senior leaders are identifying gaps between boys' and girls' attainment and taking steps to ensure that differences are addressed. Leaders recognise that they have paid more attention recently to improving pupils' basic skills than to developing links with communities with different religious and cultural backgrounds and there are plans to rectify this in future. The school is a cohesive community and there are very effective partnerships locally, especially with agencies involved in supporting pupils with additional needs.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

The starting points of Reception children are generally just below the levels expected for their age. In the past two years, children have reached national expectations by the end of the Reception Year and assessment evidence indicates that these children have made good progress. The quality of provision for the children currently in the reception is satisfactory and these children are making satisfactory progress. Children are taught either in a Reception class or in a mixed Reception and Year 1 class. This is a change from previous years when Reception age children were all taught in one unit.

Staff work effectively to provide a good balance between adult-led tasks and those of the children's own choosing. There are good opportunities for imaginative play indoors in the 'dark house' and castle. Resources for outdoor learning are more restricted and not stimulating enough to provide good quality learning, especially for physical development. The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory with good examples of lively, imaginative teaching of symmetry. Less effective teaching occurs, for example, when children sit and listen to a story but are unable to see the pictures or print because the pages are too small. Questioning skills do not always engage the children enough to think hard.

Procedures for introducing children to school build strong links with parents and carers and help most children to settle quickly into school life. Welfare and safety are a strong focus. Most children show good levels of independence in initiating their own learning and working happily together. Behaviour is good. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. The leader is new to the role and is still settling into the position but has already introduced a programme of support for a few children who are finding it difficult to settle into school life.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Parent and carer questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

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.



04 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Larkholme Primary School, Fleetwood, FY7 8QB

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. It was a great pleasure to talk to some of you. We were pleased to see how well you behave.

We found that your school no longer needs special measures and is now providing you with a satisfactory education. The Early Years Foundation Stage has improved and provides Reception age children with a satisfactory start. Adults in school take good care of you. You make satisfactory progress from your starting points. Your teachers are working hard to plan work carefully for you and to make lessons interesting.

To help your school get even better we have asked the headteacher to work with the staff and concentrate on several important things:

- make sure that the results at the end of Key Stage 2 improve so that you are well prepared for secondary school
- further improve the quality of teaching so that more lessons are good and you learn as much as possible as quickly as possible
- make sure that there are good opportunities for you to make links between subjects and provide more extracurricular activities such as clubs
- work with those who lead different subjects to make sure that you make rapid progress in all subjects.

We are confident that you will continue to work hard and do your best.

With very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ruth James
Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234**, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.