

Highfield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119204
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	379752
Inspection dates	2–3 November 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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	255
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jill McGuigan
Headteacher	Sue Cornall
Date of previous school inspection	03 February 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons and observed 11 teachers. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, school improvement officers, a parent, 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, safeguarding documentation, internal and external monitoring of the school, 147 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and questionnaires returned 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 attain and achieve across the school, especially in Key Stage 2 and in writing.
- The quality of teaching and assessment and how well this supports learning and accelerates pupils' progress and attainment.
- How effective are leaders and managers at all levels in securing consistent and sustainable school improvement.
- Whether actions to improve attendance are effective.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of two Reception classes. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and almost a third of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Above-average numbers of pupils speak English as an additional language.

There have been significant changes in staffing over the past year especially at middle and senior leadership level.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Although the schools' leaders and governing body are committed to raising attainment, a lack of clear actions and instability in leadership have restricted the school's progress. As a result, weaknesses in teaching, low attendance and inadequate achievement have not been tackled quickly enough. Previous underachievement has not been acted upon robustly and there has been too little improvement since the previous inspection. School leaders are having too little effect on the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils. The governing body is not sufficiently challenging to ensure the school improves. Consequently, the school does not have the capacity to sustain improvement.

Pupils are welcoming, polite and feel secure in school reflecting the effective safeguarding procedures. Help is readily available for pupils and families who need additional support and guidance. Attendance, however, is stubbornly low and despite recent, more rigorous application of the school's systems, too little has been done over time to liaise with parents and carers to improve it. Consequently, taking into account weaknesses in basic skills, pupils are not effectively prepared for the next stage in their education.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enjoy learning and playing in a pleasant setting and make satisfactory progress from starting points which are below those expected for children of this age. This rate of progress is not extended in Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils' attainment in English, particularly in writing, and in mathematics at the end of Year 6, is exceptionally low because pupils make inadequate progress in their learning. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those pupils learning English as an additional language, is also inadequate. Ineffective teaching leads to slow progress. In too many lessons and in pupils' work, there is a lack of challenge. Marking is inconsistent, and planning that is too general, does not take sufficient account of pupils' previous learning. By way of contrast, in the good lessons observed pupils were keen to achieve their very challenging targets and knew exactly what to do in order to improve. Pupils enjoy

extra-curricular activities, especially in sport, music and art, as well as educational visits. Overall, though, the curriculum fails to meet pupils' learning needs and interests and is not helping to raise their attainment.

Leaders and managers and the governing body have been too slow to address weaknesses because the evaluation of the school's performance has been too optimistic. Expectations of all pupils' performance are too low and actions to raise pupils' attainment have not been successful. The impact of actions taken to improve the school is not evaluated effectively enough against clear success criteria. In partnership with the local authority, the school has recently established rigorous systems to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' academic outcomes. The effects of these are not yet evident.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and thus raise pupils' attainment and achievement in all subjects, and particularly in writing, by:
 - making sure pupils know precisely how well they are doing in their work and know what to do in order to improve it
 - improving teachers' lesson planning and the use of adult support to ensure that the abilities and interests of each pupil are met
 - providing sufficient challenge in lessons to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they should.

- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
 - taking effective measures to monitor and improve the quality of teaching
 - improving the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation procedures to accurately measure the impact of the school's actions
 - raising expectations of pupils' performance throughout the school
 - ensuring that the governing body challenges the school to address weaknesses and sustain improvement
 - rigorously applying systems and engaging with parents and carers to improve attendance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Pupils take delight in lessons when they are busy, engaged and challenged. In one lesson observed, they concentrated their efforts while playing the guitar because they understood exactly what was required of them and their teacher held very high expectations of their performance. Similarly, in lessons where pupils are challenged to achieve their best, they flourish and enjoy learning. Consequently, in the most effective lessons pupils make good progress and raise their attainment. However, the pace of learning is inconsistent in too many lessons because pupils are not given work that is challenging enough and because too little is expected of them. Lesson planning does not focus sufficiently on addressing fundamental weaknesses in pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar and in basic mathematics. By the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 6, their achievement is inadequate and attainment is low. Support is not always planned carefully enough to ensure that help is readily available for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those

pupils who speak English as an additional language. As a result, they do not make enough progress.

Pupils enjoy raising funds for local and international charities. They are proud of their art work and are keen musicians. They have a sound understanding of how to live healthily and are keen to communicate with adults. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development overall is satisfactory although students' cultural development is a strength. This is because they respect and value people from different walks of life and share the school's determination to tackle discrimination.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
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	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Examples of good quality teaching clearly demonstrate how progress can be accelerated to ensure pupils' previous underachievement is reduced. Leaders recognise this and the best teaching is now being modelled and shared with other teachers. This is at an early stage and has not yet resulted in significant improvements in the quality of teaching. Planning to meet individual pupil's abilities and interests, good subject knowledge and high expectations characterise the better teaching. In most cases, however, the quality of teaching is not good enough to accelerate pupils' learning because teachers' subject knowledge is insecure, especially when teaching writing, as tasks do not match pupils' previous learning and assessment to support their learning is used inconsistently. Individual targets are not set and pupils are unsure of how they are progressing. They are also unclear about how to improve because the next steps they need to take in their learning are not pointed out clearly. Teaching assistants are not sufficiently involved in planning lessons and, consequently, they are not always used to the best effect. For example, there were too many instances of where teaching assistants observed teachers introducing a lesson rather than being directly involved in pupils' learning.

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

The curriculum provides pupils with the opportunity to participate in enjoyable and interesting activities, particularly in 'topic' work. However, as yet, the curriculum does not build on pupils' interests and abilities or sufficiently capture their enthusiasm. Opportunities to improve pupils' basic skills in reading, writing, mathematics and in information and communication technology are missed because they are not planned systematically to focus on the individual needs of pupils.

The satisfactory quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is evident in this welcoming school. Pupils' safety and well-being are central to the school's aims. Pastoral support is carefully planned and pupils' needs are acted upon by staff. Pupils who are most in need of additional support are thoughtfully and sensitively guided and nurtured. Systems to ensure regular attendance are developing and although attendance is rising, it remains low. The negative effect of low attendance on pupils' progress is not emphasised to parents and carers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Significant changes in staffing, particularly over the last year, have augmented leadership and management, although overall it remains inadequate. Most of these staff have been in post since September and it is too early to see the impact of their contribution to the school's performance. Early indications, however, are that there is a concerted vision to improve performance. Success can be seen in the improvement in financial and resource management. However, pupils' attainment and achievement remain too low because ambition is not embedded across the school and improvement has not been secured. Monitoring of the quality of teaching has not effectively resolved weaknesses. The inadequate achievement of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and of those pupils learning English as an additional language, typify why the promotion of equality of opportunity and tackling of discrimination is inadequate. The governing body provides inadequate support because it has not been sufficiently challenging about the pace of change. It is neither rigorous enough in monitoring the work of the school nor in challenging weaknesses in provision and outcomes.

The school has close relationships with parents and carers, although these are not yet having a positive effect on raising pupils' attendance. Commitment to community cohesion is most clearly evident in the school and in the local community where pupils and staff participate with community groups, for instance, to explore faith and culture. A community day was devoted to tackling 'stereotypes' and was supported by the local police officer. The school is part of a cohesive community where pupils feel very safe. The school's contribution to the wider community is more limited. Procedures to safeguard children and pupils go beyond expectations. This is because of staff and the governing body's involvement in higher-level safety training and the

guidance and support they provide to other schools. Partnerships with neighbouring schools, the local authority and community groups help to improve, for example, pupils’ behaviour and the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Despite recent initiatives and support by the local authority, however, partnerships are not effective in improving pupils’ attendance, achievement and learning.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that children are well prepared for school life and so they settle down happily into the Reception classes. Teachers and teaching assistants work together effectively because they share clear expectations and benefit from the creation of smooth-running systems promoted by leaders and managers. They plan activities to provide children with a wide range of experiences and learning from role play to sophisticated art work. These activities are of better quality indoors because resources are more plentiful. Children make satisfactory progress and are beginning to develop their independence and self-reliance. This is because they are encouraged to experiment and are expected to behave appropriately. They have confidence in the adults who play and learn with them and all welfare requirements are met. Leadership is satisfactory with an appropriate focus on improving children’s literacy and numeracy skills. This is beginning to improve their writing as well as their use of language. Information from assessments of children’s learning is not used consistently to quickly target any underachievement.

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

Over half of parents and carers responded through the completed inspection questionnaires. Of these, the vast majority are happy with the school’s provision and

all parents and carers indicated that their children enjoy school. These parents and carers also agree that the school helps to keep their children safe. A very small minority of parents and carers consider that unacceptable behaviour is not dealt with effectively. Inspectors evaluated the school's procedures for managing pupils' behaviour and found them to be satisfactory. A small number of parents and carers had concerns about their children's progress. Inspection findings show that pupils do not make sufficient progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Highfield 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 147 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 255 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	87	59	58	39	2	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	108	73	38	26	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	78	53	59	40	8	5	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	81	55	57	39	7	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	89	61	56	38	2	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	85	58	55	37	6	4	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	89	61	52	35	5	3	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)	79	54	55	37	7	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	79	54	60	41	6	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	73	50	57	39	10	7	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	85	58	54	37	3	2	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	107	73	31	21	5	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	94	64	45	31	4	3	1	1

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



4 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highfield Primary School, Chorley, PR6 0SP

Thank you for making us welcome when we inspected your school recently. We would especially like to thank the pupils who met with one of the inspectors. You were all very polite and the school has helped you to be kind and considerate. We found that you feel very safe in school.

We have also found that some important things need improving and have judged that the school needs special measures. This means that your school will get extra help to improve your education and inspectors will come back to check on the progress being made. We believe that many of you should do much better in your work and we know that you are capable of this.

We have asked school leaders and staff to help you to learn faster so that your work improves, especially in writing. We want all your lessons to be good so that you are challenged to achieve your best work. We have also asked school leaders and staff to look at your work regularly and check that you are learning enough and achieving as well as you can. You are keen to work hard and learn and you told us that you enjoy coming to school. Some of you, though, do not attend regularly enough. We would like all of you to work with your families and your school to help improve attendance.

Children in the Reception classes are welcomed into school and make satisfactory progress while they are learning and playing.

We hope you all continue to work hard and help school leaders and teachers to improve the school.

With very best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Marie Cordey
Lead inspector

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