

Cedars Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119222
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	379755
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2012
Lead inspector	Susan Walsh

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	281
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Jones
Headteacher	Steven Bladon
Date of previous school inspection	25 March 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Susan Walsh
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Additional Inspector
Additional Inspector
Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 20 lessons led by 12 teachers. Meetings were held with staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed many aspects of the school's work. This included looking at development plans, records of pupils' progress and arrangements for safeguarding as well as other documents. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They also scrutinised 186 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, as well as questionnaires returned by staff.

Information about the school

The school is much larger than most infant schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The number of pupils who join or leave the school partway through their primary education is also above average. An above average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and they speak English as an additional language. Most of these pupils are from Pakistani heritages but some are from Indian and Bangladeshi heritages. The proportion of pupils who are supported at school action plus and those with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The current headteacher was appointed in February 2011.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. Good leadership and management have brought about secure improvements to outcomes for pupils but this is not yet an outstanding school because the quality of teaching is no better than good and at present it is promoting no better than good achievement.
- Pupils are making good progress in lessons and over time. Attainment at the end of Year 2 is rising and is close to the national average. A strong focus on speaking and listening and pupils' language development means that pupils quickly learn to speak English and most are able to make good progress, especially in their reading and writing.
- Teaching is often good and is particularly innovative in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Many lessons are exciting and capture pupils' interests well. Occasionally, more able pupils are not adequately challenged and pupils are not always told how to improve their work through teachers' marking. A minority of support staff have underdeveloped skills especially regarding the teaching of phonics (letters and their sounds).
- Pupils' behaviour is consistently good both in lessons and around school. Their attitudes to learning are positive. Pupils get on well together and bullying is rare. Attendance rates are quickly improving because of better systems for monitoring and promoting attendance.
- The new headteacher has quickly gained the support of the governing body, staff and parents and carers. Parents and carers correctly describe him as an 'inspirational leader'. Although good overall, the leadership of teaching and the management of performance are not outstanding because there is some variation in the contribution of leaders to these aspects and in how effectively groups of pupils' progress is tracked. Even though the curriculum is good overall, too many worksheets are used in mathematics lessons in Key Stage 1.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate improvements to attainment and progress by:
 - enhancing the mathematics curriculum by reducing the use of worksheets and giving pupils more opportunities to record their own work
 - accelerating the progress of more-able pupils by providing a greater level of challenge in lessons, especially in Key Stage 1
 - improving the quality of marking by giving pupils' clear guidance about how they can improve their work
 - accelerating progress in reading for those who find learning challenging by making certain they have equitable access to high quality teaching
 - enhancing the skills of support staff especially when teaching phonics.
- Ensure that leaders and managers take a greater collective responsibility for school improvement by:
 - developing the skills of senior and middle leaders so that there is a greater emphasis on developing teaching and learning and promoting pupils' progress
 - using data in a more timely and effective way to monitor the progress of different groups of pupils.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Most parents and carers are understandably delighted with the good progress made by their children. When children join the Nursery class their skills are much lower than those expected for their age. Pupils from all backgrounds make rapid progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the time they leave the Reception class, their skills have improved considerably and are much closer to those that are expected for their age, although children are still a little behind in communication, language and literacy and their number work. Outcomes at the end of the Reception Year are improving year-on-year because of the teachers' high expectations. For example, in one lesson the teacher captured the children's imagination by talking about the wonderful and very useful box that he had found. He then used this as a tool to ensure that all children, including those who speak English as an additional language, were able to correctly sequence words in a sentence. Children then worked exceptionally well in pairs to work out the right order of words and carefully corrected each other's mistakes in an atmosphere of mutual support.

This overall good progress continues into Key Stage 1 where pupils are also keen and enthusiastic learners. Talk is used well to prepare pupils for writing, for example, in a Year 2 lesson pupils keenly discussed the characters in 'The Gruffalo'. Outcomes are improving year-on-year and attainment is now average at the end of Year 2, including in reading, although a fewer than average proportion of pupils reach the higher Level 3. Most pupils make good progress in reading but a small number of pupils who find learning challenging are not always able to segment words and to constantly recognise the sounds that letters make. This is because there is a tendency for these pupils to be taught phonics by the staff with less training and experience. The school is aware that outcomes in mathematics are improving at a slower rate than outcomes in reading and writing and has already improved

the teaching of mathematics and the quality of the mathematics curriculum, including implementing a number of nationally recognised initiatives. Most disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language learn and achieve well.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers feel that teaching is good. They are correct and as a consequence of good teaching, most pupils achieve well over time. Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is particularly inventive with the teachers' high expectations reflected in highly enjoyable activities that are well matched to the needs of these particular children. In the Nursery classes, staff clearly understand how young children learn. They are good at questioning children and modelling speech ensuring that children quickly develop their spoken language. Bilingual support is particularly good with staff moving effortlessly between children's home languages and English. This strong emphasis on language development and improving pupils' vocabulary continues in the Reception classes and Key Stage 1 and underpins good progress. The use of assessment is particularly effective in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teachers have thoroughly analysed and checked the progress of children and have used this information to inform their teaching. This has resulted in more children gaining a higher level of skills.

In the vast majority of lessons in Key Stage 1, work is well matched to pupils' needs but very occasionally there is insufficient challenge for more-able pupils. In the better lessons, teachers have particularly good questioning skills which are used well to enhance learning. The creative curriculum is used well to augment teaching, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and the use of themes also results in interesting lessons in other classes. This was particularly true in a Year 1 lesson where the theme of Jack and the Beanstalk generated a high level of interest and the use of role play underpinned the production of good quality writing. There was also good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development with pupils expressing clear moral values as they developed the characters in their stories. Although the teaching of mathematics has improved, the overuse of worksheets sometimes restricts pupils' opportunities to record their own work. The skills of support staff vary. Some expertly reshape teachers' explanations and provide valuable support for pupils with special educational needs that enable them to progress well overall. However, some are less skilled and the impact of this is seen particularly in the teaching of phonics. The quality of teachers' marking is good overall but on occasion pupils, particularly those who are more able, are sometimes offered disproportionate praise rather than being told how they can improve their work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Younger children make particularly good gains in their personal development learning to play well together and to socialise. Throughout the school, pupils are typically courteous to staff and each other and behave well. They are particularly keen to support each other in class. They work well in pairs, for example, when Year 2 pupils were researching the author JK Rowling using information and communication technology; they were able to cooperate well. Pupils play an important role in this well-ordered school. They have contributed towards making the allotment and developing rewards for attendance through the active school council. The ethos that has been established allows pupils to grow and flourish and encourages a good level of independence. Disruptive incidents are extremely rare but from time to time pupils' exceptional enthusiasm for learning results in overexcitement which

most staff manage well. Bullying is uncommon and children say they feel very safe in school because staff are approachable, helpful and supportive. Pupils are particularly tolerant and understanding towards those pupils whose complex special educational needs result in unusual behaviours. Parents and carers recognise and value the high standards of behaviour seen in the school. They know that their children are kept safe and value the good quality care provided by the school. Although attendance is still below average it is rapidly improving. New systems to monitor and encourage regular attendance are applied with rigour. Extended holidays are now actively discouraged and parents and carers understand the importance of consistent attendance in securing their children's good progress in school.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has quickly and accurately analysed the quality of provision in the school. While building on the good practice already evident in many areas of the school's work, he has already started to make important improvements in his quest to move the school from good to outstanding. This, together with steadily improving outcomes, illustrates the school's good capacity for further improvement. The headteacher has communicated his ambitious vision well and consequently, staff are determined to secure the very best education for the pupils in this school. Self-evaluation is generally accurate. Leaders and managers, including the governing body, actively promote equality and tackle discrimination. For example, there has been a particularly thorough analysis of outcomes for different groups at the end of Year 2. However, leaders have recognised that earlier tracking of progress would enhance their ability to identify minor discrepancies in outcomes for different groups of pupils. Consequently, the school is in the process of implementing a more robust system that will facilitate the more timely detection of potential underachievement of any group. That said, individual pupils who are in danger of underachieving are identified through regular pupils' progress meetings and are offered additional support.

There has been regular monitoring of lessons that has involved senior and middle leaders. However, full use has not been made of the information obtained from this monitoring, particularly by subject leaders, and as a result, teaching has not yet moved from good to outstanding. The school development plan is very clear about where improvements need to be made and how these improvements are to be achieved. The good curriculum focuses strongly on creativity and is, therefore, good in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Safeguarding requirements meet statutory requirements.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



14 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cedars Infant School, Blackburn BB1 9TH

It was a delight and a privilege to visit your school. The inspection team very much enjoyed talking with you all in lessons and in the playground and listened very carefully to what you had to say. We were very impressed by your good manners and the thoughtful way you treat each other. It was really good to see you helping each other in lessons. It is clear that you have a lot of fun in school but sometimes there are too many worksheets in mathematics lessons.

You are making good progress especially in your reading and writing. As a result, your attainment is getting better and is now similar to that reached by Year 2 pupils in other schools. Teaching is good in your school. We noticed that there are some really exciting lessons that help you learn. Occasionally, lessons are too easy for some of you so we have asked your teachers to improve this and to provide you with more advice about how to improve your work. Also, some staff are not as skilled at teaching phonics as others, so we have asked staff to improve these aspects of their teaching and to make sure that all of you get an equal share of the teachers' time.

The leaders and managers at your school are doing a good job. We have asked the school leaders to make sure they have enough information about the progress made by different groups of pupils and to make certain that they are always equally thorough in the way they help the school to improve its work.

You can help your school to improve further by continuing to try very hard in all your lessons. It is good to see that your attendance is improving, it is really important that you continue to come to school every day.

Yours sincerely

Susan Walsh
Lead inspector

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