

Meadowhead Junior School

Anglesey Street, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB2 5QG

Inspection dates 30–31 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils receive a good education that prepares them well for future life.
- From below average starting points, pupils make good progress and reach average standards in English and mathematics by Year 6. There has been a steady rise in the proportion of pupils reaching above average standards.
- Good, and at times outstanding, teaching enables pupils of all abilities to learn at a good rate. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive high quality guidance. They are included in all that the school offers and make good progress.
- Pupils in receipt of the pupil premium reach higher standards than similar pupils do nationally.
- Behaviour and safety are good and bullying or discrimination of any sort is rare. Pupils are very well cared for and safe at all times.
- Pupils enjoy learning. Many thrive when given the chance to use their imaginations and to learn through practical activities.
- Pupils get a good grounding in music, particularly singing. They have good opportunities to get involved in sport and drama.
- Parents support the school and are confident in all that it does. They appreciate the good communication provided and the quality of homework their children receive.
- Recent improvements to the role of leaders in mathematics and English have raised standards. Leaders manage staff well. Regular training keeps everyone up to date.
- The headteacher and acting deputy headteacher, supported by a dedicated governing body, have a clear agenda for improvement. The school is well poised to improve further in future.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- At times teachers over-direct pupils and do not enable them to discuss and debate, and work independently.
- Pupils' skills in solving mathematical problems are not good enough.
- Progress in writing is slower than in other subjects. More-able pupils are not doing as well as they could, and boys do not achieve as well as girls.
- The targets set for the progress of pupils are not consistently high enough.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 13 lessons.
- Meetings were held with governors, staff, senior leaders, a representative from the local authority and two groups of pupils.
- Evaluations of a range of school documentation added to the inspection judgements. These included the documents relating to safeguarding, the improvement plan, the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its performance and records of pupils' attainment and progress.
- The inspectors took account of the parents' views through discussions with a group at the start of the second day and by evaluating the responses to the school's recent questionnaire. A check was also made of any responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) but, at the time of the inspection, none was registered.
- An evaluation was made of the views of staff expressed in 23 questionnaires.

Inspection team

David Byrne, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Gary Kelly

Additional Inspector

Derek Barnes

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized junior school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school provides before-school care for pupils each morning.
- Since the last inspection, the leadership team has been re-organised; during the inspection, an acting deputy headteacher was in post.

What does the school need to improve further?

- Raise achievement for all pupils across the school by:
 - using the outcomes of the annual reviews of the staff's performance to set higher targets for all pupils
 - increasing opportunities in lessons for pupils to debate and discuss their ideas
 - developing strategies for enabling pupils to learn independently.
- Accelerate the progress in writing across the school by:
 - refining lesson planning so that it consistently identifies high expectations for more-able pupils
 - refining the curriculum to reflect more closely the interests of boys
 - ensuring that stimulating displays set high aspirations for writing.
- Further raise pupils' attainment in mathematics by developing styles of teaching that promote problem-solving approaches to learning and extend the application of mathematical skills across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' progress has improved since the last inspection; it is now good. The rate of progress between Years 3 and 6 exceeds national expectations. From children's starting points on entry to school that are generally below average, standards rise by the end of Year 6 to be in line with the national average.
- Effective management of the provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs has accelerated their learning. They are fully included in all aspects of school life and make good progress towards their individual targets.
- Improved teaching in recent years has led to a steady rise in the proportion of pupils exceeding the expected levels for their age in all subjects. In 2012, an above average number of pupils gained the higher Level 5 in reading.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are consistently in line with the national average. Pupils enjoy reading, doing so regularly in class. They take books home every night and are motivated to read as many as they can to qualify for a coveted reading award.
- In writing, progress is slower than in other subjects and the achievement of girls is better than that of the boys. At times, more-able pupils are not achieving high enough standards. The school is aware of this; it is actively considering ways of developing a curriculum so that is better at inspiring boys to write.
- In mathematics, pupils develop a secure understanding of the basic skills of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division; the proportion exceeding national expectations by the end of Year 6 is average and rising. Pupils are less confident in making the choices required to solve mathematical problems and in applying their skills to different subjects.
- Careful tracking the progress of learners eligible for the pupil premium funding identifies any at risk of falling behind. There is skilled and well-coordinated support for individual pupils who need extra help. In 2012, the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals was the same as that of pupils who are not. The gap between these two groups has been eliminated, which indicates the school's good promotion of equality of opportunity.
- Pupils also do well in aspects of music, the arts and sport. The school choir has a good reputation and pupils develop good skills in drama and regularly participate in sport.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good leadership by the headteacher has improved the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Expectations for the performance of staff are higher and regular checks occur on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning.
- Common strengths in all classes include warm relationships between teachers and pupils, very good strategies to enable pupils to understand how well they achieve and good support for pupils at risk of falling behind. Teachers take good account of the pupils' previous learning to plan work to take their existing skills forward. The needs of the more able in writing are not, however, always met because teachers' plans are not consistently specific enough to meet their needs.
- Good teaching of reading has boosted pupils' progress and standards. Decisions to introduce a whole-school approach to developing pupils' understanding of reading alongside writing are bearing fruit. Staff have a good knowledge of how to help pupils who struggle with spelling and reading. They have a good understanding of how to teach the sounds that letters make (phonics) where required. This is particularly so for younger pupils in the school, where there is a high number of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Writing is taught well. Pupils are encouraged to write in variety of subjects, for example, as part of a study of the Victorians. In such instances, pupils tend to enjoy writing and perform better. Boys are less confident to write and teachers are tackling this issue. Innovation in the

curriculum, for example, by working with an eminent storyteller, gives a boost to the enthusiasm of all pupils for writing. Such a creative approach is not employed enough to always meet the needs of boys. The use of displays of high quality writing to raise pupils' aspirations varies in quality and is inconsistent.

- In mathematics, there is some strong teaching with outstanding elements in upper Key Stage 2. The basics of number are taught well, but the opportunities for pupils to gain confidence and the ability to apply their skills independently are limited.
- Across the school, in the best lessons, pupils debate and discuss their ideas in order to deepen their existing understanding. This approach gets better results than the tendency in some lessons to over-direct pupils. Such an approach prevents pupils becoming independent learners and flourishing as well as they could.
- Pupils know exactly what their achievement is in English and mathematics and their targets to improve their work. They say that they like the way marking usually helps them to get better.
- The role of support staff is very significant in the good progress of those pupils who need additional support, especially those needing extra guidance in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Strengths exist in the teaching of science, and singing is taught very well. The choir has a good reputation and performs proudly at local events, such as music festivals. Pupils have the chance to learn a musical instrument taught by specialists in their field.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Almost all aspects of pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities have improved since the last inspection owing to the school's strengthened provision for promoting their personal development. Staff help pupils to feel good about themselves which puts them in the right frame of mind for learning.
- Both parents and pupils say that school is a fun place to be. This is one reason why absences have decreased and attendance is now securely average. The very effective management of pupils' behaviour and close partnerships with parents mean that disruption to learning is rare. There have been no exclusions for two years.
- The staff have good relationships with pupils and encourage most to achieve well and become sociable, well-adjusted young people. At all times pupils are safe and both pupils and parents say that bullying of any sort is rare. Pupils act sensibly and safely and demonstrate a good understanding of how to stay safe on the internet.
- Pupils are justifiably proud of their school. They like their teachers and support staff and appreciate that they give up their spare time to help them and run many enjoyable extra-curricular clubs for them.
- The pupils are friendly, thoughtful and form good friendships. They have a good awareness of the needs and sensitivities of others because staff encourage them to be helpful to one another. The way that older pupils relate to younger ones is admirable, helped by initiatives such as playground leaders and being a buddy to new children joining the school in Year 3.
- Staff trust pupils to exercise responsibility and to help the smooth running of the school. Pupils represent their classmates through the school council, organise fundraising events for others in need, and undertake jobs in and around school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, acting deputy headteacher, staff and governors have been successful in improving the school since the last inspection. Management is good, but the school acknowledges correctly that some aspects of its work require attention if standards are to rise further.
- There is a good system for checking the quality of teaching. It gives a good insight into how well pupils learn and where it could be better. This leads to suitable targets to be set for school

improvement and enables suitable training for staff and how to best to deploy them.

- Staff are regularly appraised to identify ways of supporting their professional development. The outcome of the process, however, is not focused enough on raising standards by setting targets that are as high as they could be for the performance of pupils in each class.
- Both the subjects of English and mathematics are led effectively. Strategies to raise standards in both subjects are successfully raising pupils' achievement. Recent investments in information and communication technology (ICT) are starting to benefit pupils; strong leadership of this subject is having a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- The school has a well-qualified staff team who provide for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. The success of this provision ensures that pupils are included very well in all aspects of school life. Productive links with outside agencies enhance support in school.
- The curriculum promotes good achievement in pupils' academic and personal development. It enables good spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. Expertise from within and outside the school enriches learning. Pupils broaden their understanding of the wider world and prepare well for future life.
- Partnerships with parents have strengthened since the last inspection. Parents say they feel valued and that the school listens to their views. Communication is of a high quality and includes a texting service and the website.
- The local authority has been a productive partner on the school's journey of improvement. Offering an objective view of the school's performance, supporting the introduction of new ICT systems and encouraging links with other schools are examples of the positive support provided.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body fulfils its statutory duties in all respects and has high ambition for the school. It successfully meets the requirements to ensure the safeguarding and safety of pupils. A core group within the governing body has a long-term knowledge of the school. Effective procedures secure the best value from the budget. Careful evaluations are made of the effectiveness of the spending of the pupil premium funding. The funding is used to employ additional staff for such pupils and to enable pupils to get the most out of all aspects of the curriculum, for example, educational visits. Governors are aware of the school's performance data but they do not use it sharply enough to set the highest possible targets for the performance of teaching staff. The governing body is though, aware of the link between teachers' performance and their pay. The governors hold the headteacher rigorously to account for sustaining improvements in pupils' achievement.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	119121
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	405831

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	270
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Holderness
Headteacher	Frances Stevenson
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2011
Telephone number	01254 209871
Fax number	01254 201753
Email address	frances.stevenson@blackburn.gov.uk

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