

Mereside Primary School

Langdale Road, Blackpool, Lancashire, FY4 4RR

Inspection dates 19–20 March 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.

- By the end of Year 6 the proportion of pupils attaining at the expected level has improved and is now broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils making the expected, and better than the expected, rate of progress has increased and now compares well with national figures.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The quality of teaching is now good and, as a result, pupils currently in school are making good progress.
- The wide range of focused one-to-one and small-group activities make sure that pupils' learning, social and emotional needs are well met.
- Pupils behave well. They are courteous, polite and say that they feel safe and well cared for.
- The school curriculum is good and contributes well towards pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- School leaders, including the governing body, have worked diligently to drive up standards since the previous inspection. They have put effective actions in place to improve pupils' progress and the quality of teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small minority of teaching requires improvement and not enough is outstanding.
- On some occasions more-able pupils spend too much time listening to the teacher.
- Teachers often accept work that is not well presented. Pupils do not always use punctuation or spell accurately.
- Teachers mark pupils' work well but they do not always check to make sure that pupils follow the good advice the next time they produce a piece of work.
- Despite the efforts of the school, attendance remains below average and some pupils arrive late to school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons, one-to-one teaching sessions and small-group activities and listened to pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, a local authority representative and school staff.
- The inspectors took account of 85 responses to the school’s parental questionnaire but there were too few responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to be recorded. They also considered 13 staff questionnaires.
- A range of documents were looked at, including the school’s analysis of how well it is doing, the raising attainment plan, pupil progress information, checks on the quality of teaching, minutes of governing body meetings and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. The inspectors also examined work in pupils’ books.

Inspection team

Louise Murphy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Shutt

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding provided for children in local authority care, those from services families and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is well above average.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is well above average as is the proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs.
- An above-average and increasing proportion of pupils leave and join the school at times other than expected.
- There is a considerable building refurbishment project taking place.
- The school shares its site with and manages a children's centre and a special educational resource facility for pupils with behavioural issues that are inspected independently. The latest report can be found on the Ofsted website.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching from good to outstanding to speed up progress and raise pupils' attainment further by:
 - allowing more-able pupils to move on quickly to tasks that provide an appropriate level of challenge
 - making sure that the good guidance provided by teachers is consistently followed up by pupils
 - improving pupils' presentation and their ability to write sentences with accurate punctuation and spelling
 - making sure that teaching assistants are used well throughout the lesson.
- Build on the improved links with parents in order to raise attendance further.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start school with skills that are well below those typically expected for their age. Early Years Foundation Stage staff are very well trained to recognise and effectively address each individual child's learning needs. They liaise very well with parents and create an effective home-school partnership, with a particular emphasis on language and communication development. Children make good progress relative to their starting points and enter Year 1 with skills lower than expected but which are improving.
- In 2012 the proportion of Year 6 pupils who reached the nationally expected Level 4 in English and mathematics was broadly average. This is a big improvement on previous years. The proportion reaching the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics has also improved but remains below the national average. There are occasions when more-able pupils listen to the teachers' introduction to the lesson when they could be getting on and working things out for themselves to speed up their progress.
- In 2012 a higher proportion of pupils made expected and better than expected progress from their previous starting points than did so nationally. This is an improvement on the progress made by pupils in previous years. The school's data show how well pupils in school are learning and the work seen in pupils' books confirms that pupils currently are also making good progress. Although those pupils who join the school during Key Stage 2 make good progress, their attainment is lower overall than those pupils who enter the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage because they do not always have the time to make up lost ground. Year 2 pupils who read to inspectors were enthusiastic about reading and demonstrated a good knowledge of matching letters and the sounds that they make to read new words. Pupils performed well in the national Year 1 reading check and attainment in reading is now broadly average by the time pupils leave school in Year 6.
- In the 2012 national tests at the end of Year 6 the attainment of those eligible for pupil premium funding, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, was above that of similar pupils nationally in English and in mathematics. It was similar to other pupils in the school in English and half a year behind in mathematics. The pupil premium funding is used to effectively narrow the gaps between groups of eligible pupils and those pupils who are not eligible.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because the school leader responsible works very closely with school staff, parents and other agencies to make sure that their needs are well met.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching, including the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics, has improved since the previous inspection and is now good overall, which is helping pupils to make good progress.
- Good teaching is characterised by skilled questioning, that probes pupils' understanding, and teachers' ability to plan lessons that build on pupils' previous learning. There are excellent relationships between pupils and teachers, who make it clear to pupils what they are going to learn and organise the classroom in a way that supports learning. For example, they make sure that pupils' targets are readily available to them and there are up-to-date learning prompts on the walls around them.
- Teachers mostly follow the school marking policy very well and congratulate pupils on something done well and give helpful guidance on what to do to improve. Pupils often respond to these comments, but teachers do not always check that pupils follow the advice given in their next piece of work.
- Pupils are encouraged to write with great imagination and flair. For example, one Year 5 pupil writing a poem about an interactive whiteboard produced the line, 'Lying on the concrete wall

waiting to be powered up'. A Year 3 pupil described the sound of eating an apple as 'crunching through the thick white snow'. However, there is not always enough focus on presentation or building pupils' skills in spelling and punctuation.

- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to plan effective small-group and one-to-one sessions to support pupils, particularly disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and pupils eligible for the pupil premium. However, there are times when teaching assistants are waiting for teachers to finish their introduction to the lesson and, on these occasions, they are not well deployed.
- The teaching of reading is a priority across the school. Matching letters and sounds is taught well to younger pupils and older pupils are taught in small groups to read every day. The new group reading scheme is well designed to support pupils to lead the sessions under the guidance of an adult. This helps pupils to develop their independent learning as well as their reading skills.
- Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Behaviour management is consistent and effective, which is important because a few pupils find it difficult to manage their own behaviour at times. There are also good opportunities for pupils to reflect on their learning and share their ideas and aspirations for the future.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well and are keen to learn. This contributes well to the progress they make because there is very little disruption to learning. Pupils are polite, courteous and show respect for adults and each other.
- Staff, parents and pupils say that behaviour is good and has improved considerably in recent years. This is confirmed by the declining number of incidents recorded in the school's behaviour log. Effective partnerships with parents and external agencies make certain that pupils who display any cause for concern are identified early and appropriate support is provided. The school's support for pupils whose circumstances make them potentially more vulnerable is very effective. The pastoral system ensures that pupils are cared for well.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and can explain different forms of bullying, such as cyber-bullying and name-calling. They know that they should not stand by and ignore any bullying and are confident that staff would deal with any incidents quickly and effectively.
- The school council takes its role seriously and it allows all pupils a say in how the school develops. For example, council members tasted a range of foods to decide which products would be available on the school breakfast menu. They are also extremely proud of being the first 'Rota Kids' school in Blackpool, which encourages young people to raise money for charity. Pupils at Mereside recently used their entrepreneurial skills to find imaginative ways of raising funds. They came up with the idea of making and selling headbands and refrigerator magnets, and donated the proceeds to help sick and disabled children.
- Attendance has improved in recent years and is near the national average. However, some pupils do not attend regularly enough and there are those pupils who frequently arrive late; the school is seeking to strengthen work with parents to address this.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is very well supported by the senior leadership team, who share her clear view of how successful the school can be. The improvement in pupils' progress and in the quality of teaching means that the school has improved from being satisfactory in the previous inspection to now being good. This also confirms the ability of the team to continue to drive improvements further.
- Senior and subject leaders regularly and rigorously check the quality of teaching. As a result, the training available for teachers and other adults is now well matched to the school's priorities and

individual staff needs. The headteacher makes sure that teachers are accountable for the progress of pupils in their class and there is a link between how effective teachers are and their salary progression.

- The curriculum successfully meets the needs of all pupils. Literacy and numeracy skills are practised across all subjects. Each new theme starts with a special event, such as a visit to the theatre. Pupils have the opportunity to choose aspects that they would like to study and the topic ends with a celebration of pupils' work to which parents are invited. The curriculum also contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and is further enriched by after-school clubs.
 - The promotion of equality of opportunity is effective and any discrimination is tackled rigorously. The improved systems for checking on pupils' progress have made it possible for leaders to take actions to successfully raise the attainment of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
 - Pupil premium funding has been allocated largely to fund staffing and training costs, and to provide enrichment activities for pupils. School leaders, including governors, understand that they must make sure actions taken are helping those pupils eligible for the funding. Gaps in pupils' attainment were narrowed between 2011 and 2012 in English and mathematics.
 - The local authority provided a high level of support following the previous inspection. It now has confidence in the school's leaders to continue improvements and support is becoming lighter touch.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body knows the strengths and priorities for the school. Governors undertake training to make sure that they have the correct level of expertise to challenge and support school leaders appropriately, for example in interpreting data about pupils' performance. Governors rigorously manage the performance of the headteacher and know about the quality of teaching across the school. They also recognise that teachers' progression through the pay scale must be linked to how well pupils perform. The governing body meets statutory requirements, including those for safeguarding and effective budgetary management.
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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	119345
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	405852

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Cooper
Headteacher	Susan Diver
Date of previous school inspection	4 April 2011
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