

Walverden Primary School

Bracewell Street, Nelson, Lancashire, BB9 0TL

Inspection dates 17–18 April 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.

- Achievement has risen rapidly and securely in recent years and is now good. From their starting points, all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those who are eligible for the pupil premium, make good and improving progress.
- The proportion of pupils making the expected rate of progress and the proportion making better than expected progress has risen sharply and now compares favourably with the proportions that do so nationally.
- Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 has risen at a rate much faster than the national trend and is now average.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is good because teachers choose interesting activities and usually set work that is at the right level for pupils of varying abilities.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They behave respectfully to each other and the adults that work with them. The quality of care and support that the school provides for pupils is good.
- Pupils enjoy school. Attendance is above average.
- Leaders and managers, including the governing body, have a clear view of how successful the school can be. They are driving the school purposefully forward and have successfully improved the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement since the previous inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough pupils make better progress than that expected of them for achievement to be judged as outstanding.
- A very small minority of teaching requires improvement and not enough is outstanding.
- Not all teachers make sure that work is set at the right level for all pupils and occasionally the pace of learning slows when teaching lacks some variety.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 lessons taught by 16 teachers. They also observed the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) and listened to a group of pupils read. Inspectors also looked at a sample of pupils' work in their books.
- Inspectors held meetings with: senior and middle leaders; groups of pupils; the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of a wide range of documentation including: the school's evaluation of its effectiveness; information relating to pupils' attainment and progress; school records and policies relating to the monitoring of teaching, behaviour and safety; minutes of meetings of the governing body; and local authority reports on the effectiveness of the school.
- There were not enough parental responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to produce any summary. However, inspectors looked carefully at the summaries of responses to questionnaires sent out by the school and spoke to parents as they brought their children into school. In addition, telephone conversations were held with three parents and the Lead inspector met one parent in school at the parent's request. Inspectors also took account of questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Stephen Wall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Doreen Davenport

Additional Inspector

Faheem Chishti

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Walverden is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- At approximately 90%, the proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is much higher than average. Most of these pupils are of Pakistani heritage.
- The proportion of pupils that speak English as an additional language is well-above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after.)
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The proportion of pupils who join and/or leave the school at other than normal times is above average.
- In recent years, a significant number of new staff appointments have been made including the appointment of a deputy headteacher in 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that all teaching is at least good and increase the proportion that is outstanding to raise achievement further by making sure that:
 - all teachers use information about pupils' needs and abilities to set tasks that are neither too easy nor too hard
 - teachers consistently ask questions and provide more opportunities for pupils to work in pairs and groups in order to encourage pupils to give extended answers to develop further their speaking skills
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length and use their numeracy skills in other subjects, especially the more able pupils
 - more pace and variety is injected into some teaching to engage pupils more actively in their learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are generally much lower than those typical for their age. They get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage where they settle quickly into the Nursery classes, become happy and confident learners and are taught well. As a result, they make good progress, especially in the development of their language and communication skills.
- Since the last inspection pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics have all risen at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, and at a much faster pace than nationally. In 2012, for example, pupils in Year 6 reached levels of attainment similar to pupils nationally. This represents good progress from pupils' individual starting points. School data, confirmed by evidence gathered during the inspection, show that the upward trend is set to continue.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium achieve well. Although the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in Year 6 in 2012 was about two terms behind other pupils in the year group, they too make good progress from their starting points. Furthermore, school data and inspection evidence show that this gap has closed significantly over time and continues to do so. The pupil premium funds are often used in imaginative ways that benefit individual pupils.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language has also kept pace with the improvement of other pupils in the school and is also good. This demonstrates the school's strong and effective commitment to equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. Staff quickly notice when pupils are having difficulties and organise additional help.
- The needs and starting points of pupils who join the school at other than normal times are assessed accurately. Targeted, individualised support enables them to make good progress from their starting points.
- The teaching of phonics and reading is successful in enabling pupils to make good and improving progress. Pupils enjoy reading. Younger pupils acquire a range of strategies to help them make sense of new words and read simple texts with increasing fluency. Older pupils read regularly and with deeper understanding. Although pupils are given good opportunities to develop their writing skills in literacy lessons and their numeracy skills in mathematics lessons, opportunities to use and apply these basic skills, when working as part of other subjects, are still sometimes overlooked.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection because leaders and managers have stepped up the rigour with which it is checked and have provided effective staff training. As a result, most is now good and some is outstanding. However, a very small minority requires improvement.
- Teaching is good because teachers know their subjects well. They plan lessons that contain a good variety of exciting and motivating activities to keep pupils interested and on their toes. Most teachers question pupils well to challenge them to think deeply about their answers and to give extended, reasoned responses. Occasionally, however, questions are too easy and teachers are too ready to provide answers when pupils struggle to express their thoughts. This limits opportunities to develop further pupils' speaking and reasoning skills.
- Teachers' marking is of consistently high quality, clearly showing pupils the steps they need to make their work better.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for students who are disabled or with statements of special educational needs. They very effectively support individual pupils who join the school at

other than normal times as well as those who speak English as an additional language.

- Where teaching is outstanding, lessons move along at a fast pace with high levels of challenge that make pupils think deeply. Pupils rise enthusiastically to the challenge and with real determination to give of their best. They enjoy working things out for themselves, only relying on the teacher to point them in the right direction when necessary. In a Year 4 mathematics lesson for example, working in pairs, pupils discussed how to tackle and solve increasingly complex problems with great enjoyment and determination. The problems were pitched precisely at the right level for different ability groups and pupils' tackled them with great enjoyment and determination and made outstanding progress in their understanding and application of numeracy skills.
- In the small amount of teaching that requires improvement, activities are sometimes too easy for some pupils and too difficult for others and opportunities for discussion in pairs and small groups are sometimes too limited. The range of activities is sometimes too narrow and a few pupils' interest sometimes wanes which occasionally slows the progress that some pupils make.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are taught effectively with the result that pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, opportunities for pupils to apply and extend their skills in other subjects are somewhat limited, especially for more-able pupils to show what they are capable of.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy school. They behave well in lessons and around the school treating each other and the adults working with them with respect.
- In most lessons, especially where teaching is good or better, pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Occasionally, however, where teaching does not have enough pace or variety, a very few pupils lose some concentration.
- Pupils say, and school records confirm, that bullying of any kind, such as name calling or cyber-bullying is very rare. They feel confident that it is dealt with on the few occasions when it happens.
- Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. They know what might be unsafe situations and how to avoid them or deal with them. Supervision on the playground at break times is observant and active in making sure that pupils are safe. Pupils are fully aware of the potential dangers posed by using the internet inappropriately.
- Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities in school. For example, older students help younger pupils with their reading and the school council is very active in proposing and seeing through ideas to improve the school.
- Attendance has improved significantly in recent years and is now above average.

The leadership and management are good

- Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers at all levels have taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching. The appointment of new staff has helped revitalise teaching. Leaders and managers have very effectively nurtured and developed the talents of the significant number of newly qualified teachers who are pleased with the support and guidance they have received. The rigour with which the quality of teaching is checked on has been stepped up and staff training focuses sharply on making teaching more effective. However, a small amount of teaching still requires improvement.
- Performance management is used effectively to hold teachers to account for the progress of pupils in their classes and to support whole-school improvement. The outcomes are used well to inform decisions about staff progression on the salary scale.
- Teamwork is strong in the pursuit of the drive to make the school better.
- Effective systems are in place to assess and record pupils' progress and attainment and any

individual or group of pupils that are falling behind are quickly spotted and helped to catch up. The much improved achievement of all groups of pupils shows the school's effective promotion of equality of opportunity and its good capacity to carry on improving.

- The curriculum meets most pupils' needs well. It provides a good range of enrichment activities that support effectively pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. It is planned well and provides pupils with a good variety of interesting activities. However, opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their skills in literacy and numeracy across a range of subjects are limited, especially for more-able pupils.
- The school has nurtured good relationships with the vast majority of parents. A very small minority express some concerns about, for example, how well it caters for more able pupils and how approachable staff are. Inspectors looked carefully into these concerns and discussed them at length with the headteacher. They found that the school does its best to respond to parental concerns and that there is scope for more able pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills, as outlined above.
- Policies and procedures for safeguarding are fully in place and give no cause for concern.
- The local authority has provided good support in literacy and numeracy in recent years. It is now providing light-touch support as a result of the school's much improved effectiveness.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body holds the school rigorously to account. It uses information about the school's performance knowledgeably to compare its effectiveness with other schools both locally and nationally. The governing body knows the quality of teaching and has fully supported senior leaders in the drive to improve its quality. The governing body understands fully the operation of performance management and monitors closely its link with salary progression. The governing body has a firm grip on the school's finances including how effectively pupil premium funding is allocated and used to raise achievement. Governors take part in regular training to keep themselves abreast of developments and to hold the school to account for its effectiveness.

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	119178
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	405838

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	437
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Berry
Headteacher	Margaret Thacker
Date of previous school inspection	23 June 2011
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