

# Northern Primary School

Burnley Road, Bacup, Lancashire, OL13 8PH

**Inspection dates** 20–21 November 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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 achieve well. They enjoy learning and grow into caring young citizens.
- Children join the Reception class with skills that are slightly below those typical for their age. Almost all pupils leave the school with attainment in reading, writing and mathematics that is at least average and, for many, above average.
- All pupils make good progress. This includes pupils known to be eligible for additional funding through pupil premium, and pupils with disabilities and special educational needs.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils are polite and conscientious. They have a mature outlook on relationships and feel safe in school. Bullying is rare.
- Teaching is good. A very effective contribution by teaching assistants benefits pupils' learning and personal well-being.
- Teachers are diligent in planning lessons, which usually go well. They know pupils' capabilities and provide opportunities which interest them and promote good progress.
- The headteacher and governors lead the school very well. A very positive and caring culture pervades all that goes on there. Staff are enabled to develop professionally. Their morale is high and they fully support the headteacher's leadership.
- The very large majority of parents support the school strongly. They value the overall progress that their children make.
- Governors are vigorous in discharging their responsibilities. Their high quality leadership, coupled with that of the headteacher, places the school in a strong position for improving further.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are some variations in the quality of teaching, mostly in lower Key Stage 2. These relate to the impact of marking on pupils' learning and the setting of expectations for the different ability groups in lessons.
- Pupils are not applying their skills of writing and mathematics across the curriculum. This slows progress in writing and in the performance of pupils in aspects of mathematics.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 14 part lessons.
- Meetings were conducted with governors, the staff team and four groups of pupils. In addition, a conversation was conducted with a representative of the local authority.
- Information from the scrutiny of a range of school documentation added to inspection judgements. This included:
  - samples of pupils' work in their books
  - the details relating to safeguarding and the school's improvement plan
  - the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its performance
  - records held by the school of pupils' standards and progress.
- The views of parents were ascertained by analysing 39 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- An analysis of six staff questionnaires, together with an ongoing dialogue with teachers and teaching assistants, gave the inspectors an insight into the views of the staff.

## Inspection team

David Byrne, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Denis Pittman

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil-premium funding is well below average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been some staff changes including the appointment of a new deputy headteacher and a senior leader responsible for teaching and learning.
- The school provides support for pupils through a daily breakfast club and an after-school club.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding and achievement is higher by:
  - ensuring that the senior leaders remove variations in some aspects of teaching
  - increasing opportunities for pupils to use writing and mathematics across the curriculum
  - making sure that the quality of marking consistently offers pupils guidance about how to improve their work
  - giving precise expectations to the different ability groups in lessons so that they develop a clear understanding of their achievement and how to do even better.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Most children start in the Reception class with skills that are just below typical for their age. They make good progress from their starting points. Tasks are well designed; they enable the children to make good headway, especially in reading and writing. Severe limitations in the access to a suitable outdoor learning environment, beyond the control of the teaching staff, hold back some elements of children's learning.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils generally learn at good pace but the rate varies slightly. In lower Key Stage 2, progress tends to slow, although it matches national expectations, and is rapid in Years 5 and 6. In 2013, progress between Years 2 and 6 improved in comparison to 2012. It was strong in reading and in mathematics. In writing progress aligned with national expectations although data validated by external assessors indicate that standards in writing are improving quickly across the school.
- Standards at Year 2 are typically average. The impact of an initiative to link thinking, speaking, reading and writing is having a marked impact on pupils' basic skills in literacy. In 2013, there was a significant increase in the proportion of pupils exceeding the expectations for their age. This trend is set to continue given the rigorously assessed data held by the school. In the Year 1 national screening test for the sounds that letters make (phonics), results are above average. This indicates that pupils are well prepared to access reading and writing.
- Standards at Year 6 have been rising since 2009 although they steadied in 2012. Unvalidated data for 2013 indicates that standards were above average in all subjects, and particularly so in reading. In Year 6, current pupils have an above average understanding of English grammar, spelling and punctuation. They read well and often and have good speaking and listening skills.
- The most-able are fully stretched in mathematics; an above-average proportion work at levels above or well above the expectations for their age. Some pupils are not moving fast enough in writing or some aspects of mathematics. This is because pupils are not skilled enough at transferring their basic skills of numeracy and literacy to subjects across the curriculum.
- The school ensures that all are valued and have equal chances to prosper. The few pupils known to be eligible for additional funding through pupil premium do as well as others in relation to their starting points. The school makes every effort to use the funds from the additional funding to enable such pupils to succeed. These include providing breakfast for any in need, offering a homework club and deploying teaching assistants to work with individual pupils.
- A below-average proportion of pupils have disabilities and special educational needs and they are too few to draw a reliable picture of trends in their performance. Individually, the pupils with additional needs make good progress towards their targets, benefiting from good quality individual support.
- Pupils' involvement in sport is good and enhances their health and well-being. Pupils participate in a range of inter-schools sports events. The receipt of the primary sports funding is very recent; too soon to measure its impact. The school plans to use the funds to involve more pupils in sporting activities.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good with some outstanding elements. Inconsistencies are evident and, over time, progress has been slower in lower Key Stage 2. Senior leaders recognise this and the new leadership team is taking steps to rectify the relative dip.
- Teachers know their pupils well. Pupils are keen to please their teachers and work conscientiously. Books show that the efforts to improve the quality of the pupils' presentation are bearing fruit. Pupils' handwriting is increasingly of a high quality and pupils are taking pride in their work. Reading and writing are taught well, good leadership in mathematics has secured improved teaching of calculation across the school and successfully stretched the most-able

pupils.

- Teachers' assessment of pupils' standards is generally accurate and identifies elements of the National Curriculum that individuals have yet to master. Recent local authority support validates the reliability of assessment in writing across the school and of the accuracy of assessment in the Reception class. Teachers' planning of classroom activities is usually well informed by assessment so that they cater well for the needs of pupils of different ability.
- Teachers usually get points across quickly and efficiently, so that pupils are not waiting too long to get on with independent work. At times, the purpose of the lesson is too general and not refined enough to meet the needs of different ability groups. This lack of clarity reduces scope for pupils to understand their own achievement and identify for themselves how to improve. Marking is encouraging and values pupils' efforts but does not consistently give precise guidance about how to improve the work and raise the standards produced.
- In lessons, pupils are attentive and appreciate the interesting activities that staff provide. They make good efforts and complete most pieces of work conscientiously. The needs of the most-able pupils are recognised. At times extension activities challenge these pupils to think hard.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are very effective in circulating during lessons to check on pupils' progress and to correct any errors that are occurring. There is analytical and well-focused support on an individual basis for pupils who find it hard to learn. This ensures that pupils known to be eligible for additional funding through pupil premium and pupils with disabilities and special educational needs make as much progress as others relative to their starting points and difficulties.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils behave well. Strong educational foundations laid in the Reception class prepare children well for their future education. Children develop positive relationships and understand how to treat others. About the school, pupils are polite and considerate.
- Pupils feel safe. They are very aware of the risks of misusing computer technology and the dangers that can occur when using the internet. Older pupils have a good understanding of the challenges of securing good and lasting relationships. They understand the many forms that bullying can take but do report that there are occasional exchanges of unkind words. However, pupils say that bullying is not a problem and they have every confidence in adults to sort things out. This is a view reflected by the very large majority of parents.
- Pupils relish opportunities to give their opinions and help others. They proudly talk of their roles as school councillors, and older pupils regularly support younger ones. Year 6 pupils buddy up with Reception children to share books.
- Attendance is above average. The vast majority of pupils are punctual and arrive in school each morning bursting with enthusiasm for the day ahead.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The school is led very skilfully. The headteacher has high aspirations for pupils' all-round personal and academic development. Over the years, much effort has gone into instilling a culture of consideration for others and establishing a common approach to teaching and learning. Recent staff changes have interrupted the desired consistency in some aspects of teaching. Strategies are in place to remove some key variations but there has not yet been time for them to be fully effective.
- Senior leaders, all staff and the governing body very strongly support the headteacher's ambition for the school. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and pin-points areas for improvement.
- An embedded culture encourages staff to reflect regularly on their own professional practice. While the headteacher and deputy headteacher observe lessons and monitor other aspects of teachers' work, all staff are increasingly being involved in this process. As a result, staff are keen to improve and discuss areas for improvement.

- The appraisal of teachers' work links to their pay progression. Good partnerships with the local authority, which gives excellent support to the school, enable access to good quality professional development.
- Senior staff reflect sufficiently on positive and negative indicators in the national data analysis of the school's performance. The process is very accurate in identifying specific points for improvement with individual pupils. It also gives staff a clear target for their pupils' progress and has been responsible for raising expectations across the school.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school. It concentrates appropriately on the development of reading, writing and mathematics, but also gives pupils good access to other subjects such as geography and history. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well promoted. Events such as the Asian week widen the pupils' understanding of different cultures.
- The large majority of parents rate the school highly. Some feel information about their children's achievement could be better. Inspection findings are that the termly reports are of a good quality and the annual reports are relatively detailed and informative. Staff are regularly available and very willing to listen to, and work with, parents.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body gives excellent support to the school. It is unstinting in the time and effort that it devotes to supporting it. Governors wholeheartedly endorse the staff's endeavours to sustain a caring ethos and drive learning across the whole curriculum. They are very well trained, bring impressive resourcefulness to their work and set high but realistic standards for the performance of staff and academic achievement. Governors have a purpose to all that they do and look to the long term in all decision-making.
  - Governors understand the school very well; they are frequent visitors to classes, often have discussions with staff and listen to pupils and parents. This enables governors to develop a very accurate picture of how well the school is doing. Governors are suitably involved in decisions on teachers' pay progression and the imminent changes to the pay policy nationally.
  - Governors check on the connection between the way pupil premium funding is spent and pupils' outcomes. They are aware of the deployment of additional staff to meet the pupils' needs and the efforts to secure their inclusion.
  - The governing body ensures safeguarding requirements are fully met and that necessary policies are in place.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	119190
<b>Local authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	428875

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	186
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Marc Evans
<b>Headteacher</b>	Felicity Jane Simpson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 February 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01706 874154
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