

Bickerstaffe CE School

Hall Lane, Bickerstaffe, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 0EH

Inspection dates 26–27 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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 make good progress from their starting points. An increasing proportion of pupils make more than the progress expected of them, particularly in writing and mathematics. Standards at the end of Year 6 are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children get off to a flying start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the majority achieve a good level of development by the time they leave the Reception class.
- Teaching is good. Staff create a positive working environment, providing pupils with activities that enthuse pupils and enable them to make good progress.
- Pupils' good standards of behaviour have a positive impact on the progress they make.
- Pupils are attentive, keen to learn and support and help each other well. They respond sensibly and respectfully to their teachers and other adults around them.
- Pupils say they feel safe and are well looked after by staff.
- Senior leaders have accurately identified specific weaknesses in achievement and in teaching and have put in place well-thought-out plans for improvement which are having significant impact on the progress pupils make across the school.
- Governors are proud of the school and are supportive and challenging in equal measure. They have worked effectively with the leaders of the school to improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' achievement in reading is not yet as good as in writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils exceeding the expected amount of progress by the end of Key Stage 2 is not yet good enough.
- Not enough teaching is outstanding. Some pupils occasionally find the work too easy and are not sufficiently challenged.
- Marking in subjects other than literacy does not give clear guidance to pupils on how they can improve their work.
- Opportunities to apply the skills pupils have learnt, across other subjects are not always routinely provided, particularly in mathematics.
- Subject leaders do not evaluate the impact of recent initiatives on pupils' progress regularly enough.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine parts of lessons including short visits to classrooms and support sessions for groups and individuals. One lesson was a joint observation with the headteacher. She also looked at pupils' workbooks, work on display and listened to pupils reading. All teachers were observed at least once.
- The inspector met with staff, pupils and parents. She held a meeting with the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body and six other governors, and spoke to a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector took into account 12 staff questionnaires. She also looked at information from the latest survey carried out by the school and spoke to parents at the beginning of the day to gather their views. Forty-six responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) were also considered together with two letters written by parents.
- The inspector talked to pupils in the playground and in classrooms and observed them moving around the school at different times of the day. She also held a discussion with pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2.
- She observed the school's work and considered a number of documents relating to behaviour and safety in the school. In addition, she studied the school's evaluation of its performance, its improvement plan, its data on pupil progress and documents relating to governors' meetings.

Inspection team

Yvonne Mills-Clare, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is lower than in other primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil-premium funding is lower than 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 by the local authority).
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding, in order to further improve pupils' progress by:
 - increasing expectations and ensure pupils are always stretched enough so that all pupils consistently make better than the progress expected of them in all subjects
 - offering more opportunities for pupils to apply the skills they are learning, particularly in mathematics, in the solving of real-life problems
 - continuing the ongoing work in reading to ensure all pupils have more opportunities to read to adults, themselves and each other.
 - ensuring marking in subjects other than literacy gives clear guidance to pupils on how they can improve their work.
- Further improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring subject leaders, new to their roles, monitor the impact of new strategies more regularly in order to assess their effectiveness in improving pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

Is good

- By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, all groups of children make good progress and generally leave with levels of development that are typical for their age. A large proportion of children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of development below that which is typical, particularly in aspects of communication, language and literacy, and personal development.
- The current standards achieved by pupils in the Year 1 screening check on phonics (the pupils' knowledge of letters and the sounds they make) are higher than the national average. This is as a result of the effective way in which phonics are taught. There is flexibility in grouping the pupils straight through from Reception Year to Key Stage 2, to meet the pupils' precise needs, so pupils are able to move up or down the groups as their confidence and knowledge grow.
- This good progress continues across Key Stage 1 where attainment in all subjects has risen consistently and has remained slightly above the national average for the majority of pupils.
- There are small numbers of pupils in each year group and more pupils joining or leaving the school at different times during the school year, particularly affecting Key Stage 2. As a result, there is usually a wide variation in the standards pupils reach from year to year. However, because of the school's range of support, tailored specifically to pupils' individual needs, pupils in Key Stage 2 attain well, particularly in writing and mathematics where the proportion of pupils reaching national expectations is above average and is average in reading.
- A strong focus on the teaching of mathematics as a result of the disappointing Key Stage 2 results in 2011 has seen attainment rise three times faster than average and is raising standards. An emphasis on the learning of times tables is developing pupils' mental calculation skills to good effect and creating some capable mathematicians.
- Pupils' attainment in writing is strong because writing is taught particularly well. Pupils have a range of features against which they check their work in order to succeed. These are often adapted according to the differing abilities of the pupils. Themes and topics are chosen specifically to motivate both boys and girls. They regularly have the opportunity to write for their own termly magazine, 'The Juicy Word', a glossy magazine printed and distributed to all pupils by one of the parents.
- The school has responded swiftly to the disappointing 2013 results in reading. Many new ideas to engender a love of reading have been introduced. Daily guided reading lessons with teachers and teaching assistants are improving levels of achievement. Pupils who read to the inspector were fluent, confident and keen to talk about their favourite books and authors. Almost all of them had e-readers at home and they particularly liked the class books read to them by teachers.
- Although overall the most able pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, they do not always make as much progress as they could, particularly in reading and mathematics. Occasionally, pupils are not sufficiently challenged to do as well as they can by applying their skills to problem solving. In reading, achievement for these pupils is accelerating thanks to a strong focus on reading in the school.
- Very few pupils in any one year group are known to be eligible for the pupil premium. This makes comparisons in attainment between them and their classmates unreliable. However, because of small group and individual support, most make progress in line with their peers. The school places great emphasis on meeting the individual needs of all its pupils and clearly demonstrates a strong commitment to equality of opportunity.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and the very small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to their classmates from their individual starting points. This is because they are supported well in group and one-to-one sessions which help them to learn effectively.

The quality of teaching**Is good**

- A significant feature of the good teaching in the school is the calm, purposeful and well-managed learning environment. Pupils are encouraged to work together in pairs and groups as well as individually and they support each other's learning well. In all classes, pupils listen carefully and apply themselves diligently to their tasks.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children develop their love of learning. They behave well and develop good attitudes to their tasks. The classroom is bright and colourful with a wide range of activities to ensure children develop confidence and resilience.
- Work is prepared well and resourced successfully so that pupils have the necessary equipment to tackle the activities they are given. For example, in a Year 1 and 2 class pupils were working enthusiastically writing their 'Tardis Adventure'. They worked well and made effective use of the banks of words and prompts that were available to them around the classroom. Features they needed to include were given to them and these were adapted to challenge the pupils of different abilities. This resulted in some good outcomes for these pupils.
- Pupils are interested in learning because a range of activities and variety of approaches sustain their enthusiasm. Good use of information and communication technology, available in all classes, extends pupils' learning with pictures, video clips and games which ensure pupils remain excited about their learning. For example, in the Reception class, songs and actions make learning fun. Children were enthralled to see the sun double before their eyes!
- Extension activities are often provided for the different ability groups. This is especially beneficial for the most-able, who often move on to their learning without wasting time waiting for other pupils or sitting listening to unnecessary explanations. However, this challenge for pupils is not as effective when they find work too easy. Some extension tasks, particularly in mathematics, do not routinely offer pupils the opportunity to use the skills they have learnt to solve real-life problems and extend their learning.
- Books are generally neat and most pupils take a pride in the work they do. Pupils are clear on the expectations of how to set down their work. Most pieces of work identify what pupils are expected to learn in lessons.
- Marking in literacy makes it clear to pupils how well they are doing and what they need to do next. Often pupils are encouraged to reflect on the quality of their work by being involved in marking their own and others' learning against agreed criteria. However, in other subjects, marking is less developed and pupils are not as clear about what they need to do to reach the next level of learning.
- Pupils benefit from the extra adults available to support their learning. Teaching assistants are trained well and work effectively to target support where it is most needed. For example, a teaching assistant was observed working with a pupil in a one-to-one group session. She was using highly effective questioning to draw out understanding and explanations to promote the pupil's learning.

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

- This is a warm and welcoming school, where pupils are well cared for. Classrooms and public spaces are clean and mostly uncluttered. Pupils themselves are proud of their school and look neat and smart in their school uniforms.
- The vast majority of pupils are open, friendly and polite and respectful to staff, visitors and each other. Relationships between pupils and adults and pupils themselves are good and pupils respond positively to teachers' requests.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. They behave well, both in lessons and around school. Almost all pupils have positive attitudes to learning. The vast majority settle to work quickly and are eager to participate in activities.
- Disruption in lessons is rare. None was seen during the inspection and school records support

this finding.

- Pupils enjoy the responsibilities they are given. Pupils are members of the school and sports' councils, act as school librarians, while 'buddies' look after the youngest children when they first enter the school.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare. They are confident that there are adults in school whom they can trust and turn to if they are worried about anything. They have a good awareness of the different types of bullying including physical, verbal and how computers and mobile phones can be used for bullying purposes.
- A number of parents who responded to Ofsted's on-line questionnaire (Parent View) expressed concern with regard to bullying during the last school year. This was explored with senior leaders and governors. Documentation relating to this was found to be rigorous and the school's response was shown to be thorough, yet sensitive and discrete. Subsequent conversations between the inspector and other parents confirmed that this was confined to part of this one year and is not an ongoing issue for the school. Indeed, the vast majority of parents who responded to the same questionnaire indicated their children were happy in school. The above average attendance of the pupils pays testament to this.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Effective measures are in place to assess the risks of activities and the premises. Pupils are closely supervised during play and lunchtimes.
- Pupils understand how to keep safe. They are familiar with 'stranger danger', road safety, e-safety and the danger posed by fireworks because of visits and visitors to school and the lessons they are taught.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well by the school. Strong links with the church develop pupils' spiritual and moral development well. Pupils are keen fund-raisers, evident in the 'Tremendous Tree' on display in the school hall, celebrating pupils' individual achievements, from bicycle rides in the school holidays to selling ice-creams for 'Water Aid' and cancer charities. Social development is encouraged through the many opportunities the pupils have in leading assemblies and working closely together in groups and pairs in their lessons, while cultural development is promoted through religious education lessons and programmes of study.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. She is committed to ensuring that pupils do as well as they can. She is well supported by staff who share this vision and provide a nurturing environment where pupils can thrive.
- The tracking and recording of information on pupils' progress is detailed for classes, year groups and individual groups of pupils. It is used as a basis for discussion between senior leaders and individual teachers, when analysing the progress pupils make.
- Subject leaders, many of them new to their roles, are bringing a wealth of ideas to their subjects in order to bring about improvement. This is particularly so in reading, which is a particular focus for the school this year. Competitions, rewards, library sessions and class story, where the teacher reads to the class, are engendering a renewed love of reading among pupils. As one pupil commented, 'Since we've been doing all these different things, reading has gone through the roof!' However, leaders are less sure of the real impact these strategies are having, as their monitoring of improvement is not yet regular enough.
- Procedures to check the performance of teachers are thorough and rigorous, with checks on the quality of teaching undertaken by leaders. Targets set are closely linked to school priorities and relevant training opportunities, and progression on the pay scale is closely linked to these.
- The curriculum is good and pupils are given a range of extra opportunities through after-school and lunchtime clubs run by teachers and parent volunteers. There is an appropriate emphasis on the teaching of English and mathematics, but pupils do not always have enough opportunities in day-to-day lessons, to use the skills they have learnt, particularly in mathematics in order to

enhance their learning.

- The primary school sports funding has been used in a variety of ways. The school is participating in the School Sports Partnership, which provides the school with specialist training for teachers. This also offers opportunities to work alongside specialist staff, developing teachers' skills to teach lessons and increasing pupils' participation in different sports, including opportunities for competitive sports. In addition, extra swimming lessons are being provided in the summer, along with 'taster days' offering pupils the opportunity to try a range of different sports, extend their skills and develop a love for sport.
- The local authority provides 'light-touch support' for this good school. The local authority representative meets with the headteacher regularly and provides support at her request.
- The improvement in standards and progress in mathematics over the past two years, combined with the effective way the school has strengthened writing since the last inspection, indicates the school has good capacity to continue to move forward.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development because it is provided with regular and comprehensive information on how well pupils are doing and on the quality of teaching. Governors are regular visitors to the school to observe the school's work. They ensure that staff, including the headteacher, meet their targets before considering any recommendations for any pay awards. As a small school, governors need to keep a firm grasp on funding, including that of the pupil premium in order to target funding in the most effective ways, bringing about increased pupil engagement and improvements in progress across the school. Governors attend regular training to develop their skills and are supportive and challenging in equal measure. Governors fully meet their statutory duties, including that of safeguarding.

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	119381
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	439586

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	82
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	P Wilcox
Headteacher	E J Hall
Date of previous school inspection	16 March 2009
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