

Cedars Primary School

Hawthorne Street, Blackburn, Lancashire BB1 9TH

Inspection dates 19-20 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Senior leaders and governors have successfully led the school through a period of great change. Their resilience, determination and high aspirations for the school have ensured that pupils' achievement is good and continues to improve.
- Children in the early years get off to a good start. From low starting points, children make good progress and are well prepared for learning in Key Stage 1.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 are making good progress with disadvantaged pupils making the same or, on occasions, better progress than other pupils.
- Standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2014 were below average in mathematics, writing and reading. For almost all pupils this represented good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils' behaviour is good both inside and outside the classroom. Their positive attitudes to learning contribute well to their good progress. Many pupils are new to England and to speaking English. Despite this, they settle quickly and enjoy learning.
- Pupils feel safe, happy and enjoy coming to school. Parents confirm this view. It is also reflected in pupils' improving rates of attendance.
- Teaching is nearly always good, with some examples of outstanding practice.
- Teaching assistants provide a good level of support to individuals and groups of pupils, which ensures they achieve well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some most able pupils are not always provided with sufficiently challenging work to ensure they make the progress of which they are capable.
- Marking is not always followed up to ensure that pupils respond to the guidance from teachers.
- Targets and timescales in the school's development plans are not precise enough to allow leaders to check quickly how well actions are bringing about improvements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 20 lessons or parts of lessons including three jointly with school leaders.
- Members of the inspection team heard pupils read and looked closely at samples of pupils' work.
- Pupils' records and assessments were scrutinised. Inspectors also observed pupils at lunchtime and during their break times.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked closely at the school's work, including minutes of meetings of the governing body, the school's analysis of how well it is doing and its improvement plan, documents relating to behaviour and safeguarding and the school's data on pupils' progress.
- Insufficient responses were received to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to generate a report. However, inspectors took account of the school's own survey of parents. Inspectors also took account of the 47 responses to staff questionnaires completed during the inspection.

Inspection team

Michael Hewlett, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Sheila Mawer	Additional Inspector
Hilary Ward	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- It became a primary school in September 2013 when Cedars Infant school extended its age range to cater for 3 - 11 year olds. At the same time, 257 Key Stage 2 pupils (that is, 7 - 11 year olds) joined the school from a nearby junior school that closed.
- Almost all pupils come from minority ethnic groups, with pupils of Pakistani heritage representing over half of the school population. A substantial proportion of pupils do not have English as a first language.
- The school has an above average proportion of pupils who enter and leave the school at other than the usual times.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average. This is funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- In 2014, the school met the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The school runs a breakfast club for pupils from 8.00 a.m. to 8.45 a.m. each morning.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been major changes to the school. Staff numbers have been increased by 50 and the senior leadership team now has five members. Three of these joined the school in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching in order to raise pupils' achievement by:
 - making sure that pupils, particularly the most able, are given the challenging tasks they need to enable them to reach the higher levels
 - providing enough time for pupils to make corrections and ensuring that pupils act on the advice they are given in marking.
- Improve leaders' checks on the school development plan by ensuring that clear targets and timescales are agreed for each priority.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has demonstrated exceptional leadership skills as he has successfully guided the school through a period of great change and uncertainty. He has been well supported by the rest of the leadership team and governors, as they have overseen what one parent described as the 'harmonious transition' from infant to primary school. The school has demonstrated a strong capacity to continue its improvement.
- Staff morale is high and there is a strong commitment to raising achievement for all pupils and providing an extensive range of learning opportunities. This has contributed to the improvements in pupils' achievement.
- Leaders regularly check on the quality of teaching and share good practice so that everyone can benefit from the high levels of expertise found in the school. Teachers are set challenging targets linked to pupils' progress. Their pay rates are affected by the success of their work.
- The pupil premium is used effectively to ensure that any gaps in attainment between eligible pupils and others are closing. The funding is spent on additional teaching staff and enriching pupils' experiences.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's performance. Plans for future improvement are focussed on the right areas and are regularly checked. However, some targets for improvement are not precise enough. They do not always contain clear and measurable targets and timescales to enable all leaders to check that the actions taken are having the required impact.
- Middle leaders, many of whom are new to the post, are playing an increasingly influential role in improving their subject areas. For example, the English and mathematics coordinators carefully analyse pupils' performance data to check on the impact of the additional support that is offered for groups and individuals.
- The school has made good preparations for the implementation of the new curriculum. The curriculum is well planned and subjects are clearly linked with educational visits incorporated into many of the topics.
- These good links were illustrated during a Year 4 history topic, which compared the lives of children in Victorian times with those of children in modern Britain. Pupils' learning was brought alive following a visit to Quarry Bank Mill where the pupils dressed up as Victorian children. Their discussions about their own lives and those of others who live in different parts of Britain showed a growing understanding of and respect for other views. Experiences such as these contribute well to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, as well as helping to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.
- Parental and staff questionnaires show that there is strong support for the school and for the leadership. An overwhelming majority of parents say that their children are happy, safe, well behaved and making good progress.
- The primary school sport funding is being used effectively to promote pupils' greater participation in sport. Staff are benefiting from working alongside sports coaches and are growing in confidence in teaching the subject. Pupils have greater access to after-school sports clubs and are participating in more inter-school competitions.
- The local authority has provided good support for the school. This has included assisting the headteacher and governors in reorganising and staffing the school as the school's age range was extended.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very effective. They know the school's strengths and areas to develop well. They have a good understanding about the quality of teaching and how well pupils perform compared with other schools. Governors set targets for the headteacher and ensure that these inform the targets that are set for other members of staff when managing their performance, so all are held fully accountable for their work. Governors keep a close eye on the finances and ensure that additional funding, such as the pupil premium and the primary school sport funding, is spent wisely and represents value for money. Governors use a wide range of skills to support and challenge the school's leaders in improving the school. They have been very helpful in planning for the growth of the school and recruiting the right staff. Governors regularly review their own effectiveness to ensure they are making a difference to outcomes for pupils.
 - The governing body ensures that all statutory duties are fulfilled, including those for safeguarding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' good attitudes and behaviour ensure that learning is rarely interrupted by incidents of poor behaviour. Pupils talk proudly of their school and how behaviour is generally 'much better than it used to be because we want our school to be the best.' This helps to explain why pupils' achievement continues to improve.
- Pupils are very supportive of each other both in class and when they are playing outside. They enjoy taking on additional responsibilities, such as school council members and 'playground buddies' where they plan activities for younger children.
- Pupils are confident that their views and opinions are listened to and respected. For example, they helped to plan what play equipment should be purchased for the playground and where it should be sited.
- The school's attractive environment is due in large part to the way in which pupils show care and respect. Classrooms, stairs, corridors and playgrounds are tidy and free of litter. In the breakfast club, pupils are well behaved and respectful to adults. The club provides pupils with a calm and welcoming start to the school day.
- Fixed-term exclusions are used rarely and the school ensures that, on return to school, pupils are provided with careful support.
- The school's strong focus on the importance of regular attendance has resulted in year-on-year improvement. Currently, attendance is above the national average for similar schools with punctuality also improving.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Staff are well trained to recognise early signs of abuse and work closely with outside agencies to ensure pupils' safety both inside and outside school.
- Pupils understand the different types of bullying, including name-calling, racism and cyber-bullying. Pupils and parents say that bullying does happen occasionally but they are confident that adults in school will deal effectively with any problems or concerns.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about keeping safe in different situations as, for example, when they use the internet or cross the road.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching overtime in each key stage is good. Consequently, most pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, pupils new to English and disadvantaged pupils achieve well.
- The most able pupils also make good progress, although in some classes the work they undertake is not sufficiently challenging. On these occasions, they do not achieve as well as they could.
- Pupils find most lessons engaging because the teachers plan work for them that they find interesting. Teachers use questioning well as a means to extend pupils' understanding. For example, in a combined Year 5 and Year 6 class, pupils were encouraged to write 'quality text.' Perceptive questioning from the teacher and from individual classmates challenged pupils' thinking. A typical comment from pupils was, 'If we want to make our writing more interesting, it's no use settling for the first word we think of.'
- Teaching assistants provide skilful support for groups and individuals, which helps pupils to make good progress. They work well with teachers to share information about how well pupils are getting on.
- Mathematical, literacy and communication skills are taught well across the curriculum. For example, older pupils are involved in setting up 'mini enterprises' requiring them to cost their products, plan their sales campaign and persuade their school friends to buy.
- Relationships between pupils and adults are very good and pupils are respectful and polite. Pupils work cooperatively and listen to and value each other's contributions.
- Homework is set regularly for pupils. This is highly valued both by parents and by pupils who understand the importance of consolidating what they have learned.
- Reading is well taught. Pupils who were heard to read by inspectors did so with interest and expression. Older pupils spoke enthusiastically of the books they have read and why they prefer a particular author.
- The numerous pupils who speak English as an additional language are taught well. All staff are aware of their needs and use a wide range of well-chosen strategies to help pupils to become confident in reading, speaking and writing English. They are given plenty of opportunities to practise their skills.
- Pupils' work is mostly marked diligently. Teachers' comments provide clear guidance to pupils on what

they have done well and what they need to do to improve. There is much less evidence of pupils being given time to follow up on the comments and embed the guidance in their future work.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement is good throughout each key stage despite many barriers to learning that they encounter. Current school data show that all groups, including disadvantaged pupils, are making good progress from a range of different starting points across the school.
- The 2014 data paints an improving picture in Key Stage 1, with pupils attaining the school's best results in the last three years. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is still below the national average but shows a strongly improving trend over time. Many of these pupils started at times other than the start of the school year and most were new to English. Nevertheless, in this key stage, inspection evidence confirms that this improving trend is being maintained with more pupils now on track to reach the higher levels.
- There is no trend in attainment over time for Key Stage 2 pupils because they only joined the school in September 2013. Results in 2014 showed that pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics were all below average. However, progress data confirm that the different groups of pupils all make good progress from their starting points. Scrutiny of pupils' current work indicates that good progress is being made in all the year groups and that pupils' attainment levels are increasing, especially in reading which has been a school priority.
- A strength of the school is the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make). This has resulted in an improving trend in results in the national phonics screening check for Year 1 pupils. While results are still below the national average, pupils' increased confidence in tackling unfamiliar words is evident across the school.
- The 2014 Key Stage 2 results for mathematics showed that the gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school was about two terms. In reading, disadvantaged pupils were about one and a half terms behind others, while in writing the in-school gap was narrower with disadvantaged pupils one term behind others. Compared with non-disadvantaged pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils in the school were about four terms behind in mathematics and reading and three and a half terms behind in writing.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils in Key Stage 1 is similar to and sometimes better than non-disadvantaged pupils in the school. Their attainment is similar to those of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. Their progress has accelerated as a result of good teaching and well targeted support.
- The most able pupils generally make good progress. In the most recent assessments, all of the small number of the most able pupils make the progress they should in reading, writing and mathematics. However, observations of the school's current work indicate that the level of challenge for this group in some classes could be greater.
- The well-targeted support for all groups, including disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, the most able and those from other ethnic backgrounds means they make equally good progress as their peers in English and mathematics. This illustrates the school's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils.

The early years provision is good

- Children achieve well because the early years is led and managed effectively and all staff know the children as individuals. Children have good opportunities to catch up quickly from low starting points. Their early skills are developed systematically, especially children's spoken language as most of them arrive in school with little English.
- Teaching is consistently good. Activities have a clear purpose and adults help children to develop their understanding.
- The inside and outdoor areas are attractive places to learn. Many of the topics arise from children's own interests. For example, a recent topic on owls resulted in the construction of 'bird hide' outside and children making food for the bird feeder. Staff celebrate children's work by displaying it widely.
- Children have access to a good variety of resources, which they can select for themselves, and this encourages them to use their imagination and sustain their concentration.
- Children are keen to learn and their behaviour is good. Staff keep comprehensive records of children's achievements. Staff communicate well with parents and try to involve them in their children's learning. As

a result of the good provision in the early years, children are well prepared to join Year 1.

- Staff ensure that children are kept safe and do all they can to build their confidence.

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	119222
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	447796

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	487
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Jones
Headteacher	Steven Bladon
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2012
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