



Cedars Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119222
LEA Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number 280496
Inspection dates 27 June 2006 to 28 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Lynne Read

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Hawthorn Street
School category	Community		Blackburn
Age range of pupils	3 to 7		Lancashire, BB1 9TH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01254 261609
Number on roll	273	Fax number	01254 678 193
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Doreen Taylor
Date of previous inspection	1 January 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Beaumont

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large nursery and infant school serves a predominantly Asian community in an urban area of Blackburn. A significant proportion of families have the support of social services or other agencies and the school caters for transient families. The proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is above average. When they enter the Nursery class, children's development is very low and most are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The majority of pupils are of Indian or Pakistani heritage, a small proportion being Bangladeshi, White British or mixed Asian and British. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average overall, but the number of pupils who have a statement of special educational need is higher than in most schools. Cedars Infant school is part of the Excellence in Cities project.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Cedars Infant judges itself a good school and the inspectors agree. It provides good value for money and prepares pupils very well for their next stages in education and life. Parents commend the school highly, especially the good home-school links, the standard of care and the good progress their children make. Parents' and pupils' views are valued and acted upon, and excellent links with outside agencies and other schools bring many benefits to pupils' learning.

The quality of education in the Foundation Stage is good. From a very low starting point, pupils do well and often make exceptional progress in spoken English and personal skills. Throughout the school, they develop as confident and independent learners, making good progress in mathematics and reading. In writing, learning has improved recently but could be better still. Pupils' creative and physical skills are well developed.

The school has particular strengths in the outstanding enrichment of the curriculum and the care and support provided for pupils. The curriculum is rich in practical experiences and gives pupils a solid and broad foundation for later learning. Teaching is good. It uses assessments of pupils' work well to plan lessons that meet their language, intellectual and personal needs. Pupils receive good advice on how to improve their work in writing, but there is no similar system in mathematics. The provision of lessons in mother-tongue and the good support of the bi-lingual assistants in classes are major factors in the good learning seen.

The headteacher's excellent leadership promotes strong teamwork, very good links with the community and a nurturing environment in which pupils flourish. Management is good but some roles overlap and parts of information are not shared. Subject and senior managers now need to work more closely together to set targets for pupils' learning. Since the last inspection, good improvements have been made and the school has good capacity to maintain its strengths and to improve even further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve progress in writing and opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in other subjects.
- Achieve better coordination in the work of senior managers and subject leaders in using assessment information to set targets.
- Give pupils better advice to help them improve their work in mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good overall. When children enter Nursery, their development is very poor and the majority of pupils speak little or no English. In the Nursery and Reception classes they make good progress, although most do not meet the expected learning goals for their age. By the time they enter Year 1, their personal development has

risen to around average and most have learned to understand and use English well enough to take full advantage of their lessons.

In 2005, standards at the end of Year 2 were well below those of most schools and below this school's usual level. This was because the number of pupils with learning difficulties was unusually high. The number and timing of extended holidays also disrupted pupils' progress. Work in books and the school's assessments show that pupils, including those with learning difficulties, are making good progress in mathematics, reading and speaking and listening. Their standards are broadly average. Progress in writing has improved recently with the introduction of a new scheme. It is satisfactory but could be better.

This school works in challenging circumstances and is constantly aware of many issues that affect the pupils' learning, including health, social, language and cultural problems. Staff work exceptionally hard to ensure that all pupils have the broadest foundation on which to build their later learning. As a result, personal, creative and physical skills are well developed in boys and girls and across the ethnic groups. By Year 2, pupils show high levels of self-esteem and are confident learners. Their speaking and listening skills reflect exceptional progress. The more able pupils have good challenge and do well. Those whose mother tongue is English benefit from the school's emphasis on language, and they too make good progress. Reports from the junior school show that pupils settle easily and continue to make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good, with some outstanding features. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and work hard. Behaviour is very good and pupils show excellent care and consideration for each other.

Attendance is a little below average because of extended visits abroad and days taken in term time to celebrate religious festivals. Staff and governors do all they can to ensure that both parents and pupils are well aware of the need for good attendance. They have had some success as visits abroad are much shorter.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good and their cultural development is outstanding. Pupils know right from wrong and the school is a harmonious community. The richness of cultural and religious diversity is celebrated extremely well and pupils of different backgrounds delight in sharing their experiences. Pupils enjoy stories, music and art from around the world, which supports their spiritual development well. Through their council, pupils make their views known but there is scope to extend their role further in running and developing the school. Pupils have a secure awareness of how to keep safe and healthy, and they enjoy varied opportunities for sport and exercise.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The school rightly places a strong focus on developing speaking and listening skills in English. Staff are very effective in questioning and in encouraging discussion. Interventions from the bi-lingual assistants and the teaching in different mother tongues accelerate progress and extend pupils' confidence. Activities are often planned in small groups, taking advantage of the good number of adults in classes. Because pupils move between these short, focused sessions, the pace of their learning is good and their interest and attention are maintained. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support; consequently, they play a full part in lessons and make good progress. Teachers plan a rich variety of activities, both practical and written, so that pupils enjoy their work and classes are busy and exciting places to learn. Imaginative planning and organisation mean that new vocabulary and understanding are generally practised and reinforced well. However, some writing tasks are not challenging enough and opportunities are sometimes missed to demonstrate good writing and to extend skills across the curriculum.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It offers a richness of practical and interesting experiences. Pupils have good opportunities to make continual use of their reading, mathematics and computer skills, but opportunities to practise writing are limited. The emphasis on creative and personal education is recognised through the national Artsmark and Healthy Schools awards. Extra-curricular activities are outstanding. For example, pupils enjoy physical activities, music, gardening and using the computers. Visits and visitors very effectively take learning beyond the classroom and widen pupils' horizons. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities have good support as they work through tailor-made programmes of study. Interesting study packs for pupils who go on extended holidays go some way to reducing the disruption to their learning.

The curriculum in the Nursery and Reception classes invites children to explore and investigate and to follow their own interests, and it makes very effective use of the outside areas. As a result, children quickly become independent and inquisitive learners.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are happy and safe in this school because their welfare is seen as paramount. Child protection procedures and other essential safety checks are firmly established. Good relationships and trust between parents and teachers arise from the very strong links that are forged with families and the community. As the home-school officer is a key figure in supporting families, problems that could affect the pupils' education are often avoided.

Excellent partnerships with external agencies, such as those covering social and health issues, benefit pupils' academic and emotional development. The school has the Inclusion Award in recognition of the good work done to ensure that all pupils and adults, regardless of disability, can have full access to all that is on offer. Great care is taken to ensure pupils settle happily into school, and very good links with the junior school result in pupils looking forward to moving on and extending their skills. In writing, the teachers have developed new ways of marking work and advising pupils on how to improve. Mathematics lacks similar good practice.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and is held in high esteem by staff and parents. She is instrumental in maintaining the excellent, caring ethos shared by all adults, who work enthusiastically as a strong team. Staff and governors are fully committed to developing a broad foundation for learning for all pupils and to overcoming or reducing potential barriers to future learning. They take regular feedback from the junior school staff, who testify to the fact that the quality of pupils' infant learning underpins and facilitates good progress through later years.

The school reviews its performance regularly. Managers and staff know its strengths and where it needs to improve. Senior managers and subject leaders each keep accurate checks on pupils' progress, but their roles are not efficiently integrated to give the subject leaders a sufficient part to play in setting targets.

The strong sense of pride in school is reflected in the high quality of the learning environment, administration and maintenance. The governors support the headteacher well and are actively involved in many aspects of school life. All statutory requirements are met.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	No
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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To the pupils of:

Cedars Infant School

Hawthorn Street

Blackburn

Lancashire

BB1 9TH

29 June 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for welcoming me and my two colleagues to your exciting school to carry out the inspection. You gave us some very good help and, in return, I would like to share our findings with you.

Cedars Infants is a super place to be. Your attitudes are good and you behave very well and take excellent care of each other. You work hard and are making good progress. Well done! Your teachers and families can be very proud of you.

The headteacher and staff work very hard to make sure you are safe and happy. It is good to see how much you enjoy your lessons and how busy you are. We noticed some especially smiley faces in the 'Super Dance' and art sessions. We also enjoyed looking at your beautifully presented work on display. Please thank your parents for sending us so many completed questionnaires and letters. They are clearly very pleased because you are happy in school and learning such a lot.

You do well in speaking and listening, reading and mathematics as well as in creative work and physical development. That is good. We agree with your teachers that, although your writing is improving, it can be even better. We like the way your teachers give you ideas to improve your writing and the way you are beginning to check your own work. It would be good to see something similar in mathematics, so that you can be more involved in your own learning in that subject too.

Thank you once again for your friendly welcome. There is a great deal about your school of which you and the staff should be proud. Please accept my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs L Read

(Lead inspector)