



Cherry Tree Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105187
LEA Bolton
Inspection number 284475
Inspection dates 7 March 2006 to 8 March 2006
Reporting inspector Ms Angela Westington HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Highfield Road
School category	Community		Farnworth
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Bolton, Lancashire BL4 0NS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01204 333033
Number on roll	450	Fax number	01204 333034
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Laurie Williamson
Date of previous inspection	2 December 2002	Headteacher	Ms Anthea Michel

Age group 3 to 11	Inspection dates 7 March 2006 - 8 March 2006	Inspection number 284475
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Cherry Tree is a large primary school that serves an area of considerable social disadvantage. Children's attainment when they start school is below average and, for some, it is very low. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is above average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Only a few children are from minority ethnic heritages and seven are at the early stages of learning English. The headteacher was appointed in September 2005. A new building is planned and is to include a local special school and nursery.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the standards attained in English, in Key Stage 1 and the achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Improvement is also needed in the attendance of the small number of pupils whose absenteeism causes particular concern.

Cherry Tree Primary School has come a long way in a very short time. Under the very good direction of the new headteacher and with the support of the local authority, the school has begun to tackle a substantial legacy of underachievement and low standards that has existed for too long.

Standards across the school have been too low for a number of years. In the Foundation Stage, standards are satisfactory and the children get off to a good start in their education. In Key Stage 2, standards have risen in mathematics and science recently and they are now around the national average. Standards in English though, remain low. In Key Stage 1, standards have been exceptionally low; there has been no rise in standards in the national assessments for seven-year-olds, as there has been at age 11. In both key stages, there are too many pupils who have not made consistent enough progress, whatever their starting points.

Over several years, the local authority has intervened and challenged the school to raise standards but met with limited success. The appointment of the new headteacher in September 2005 has allowed the local authority and the school, in partnership, to renew the focus on raising standards and the pupils' achievements.

There are very early signs of improvement in teaching, in the leadership and management of key staff and in governance. There is also an acceptance by staff at all levels that standards need to rise. Nevertheless, concerns remain about the low standards and inadequate progress made by pupils in Key Stage 1, the standards in English, especially in writing and in teachers' subject knowledge to improve this, and the inadequate achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The curriculum is satisfactory, as is provision for ensuring pupils are cared for, guided and supported. Pupils' behaviour is good and their personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Attendance is low but this is being tackled.

Given the weak results and achievements of too many pupils, the school is not providing adequate value for money. Despite this, the school can demonstrate improvements in teaching and in the achievements of some pupils. It therefore has the capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue the good start made in raising standards by targeting underachievement and dealing with it, particularly for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Raise standards in English throughout the school.
- Improve teachers' subject knowledge of writing, especially in Years 3 to 5 to tackle the legacy of underachievement.
- Improve attendance for the small number of children who are absent too often.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Results in the national test results for 11-year-olds have improved in recent years in mathematics and science and they are now at national averages; improvement in English has been slower. Standards of work observed in lessons reflect these results generally, but there is considerable variability in the progress that pupils have made across the school.

Test results for 11-year-olds in English have been very low for several years. In 2005 two thirds of the pupils reached Level 4, the standard expected for their age. This was the first time the proportion of pupils gaining Level 4 or above had met the government's threshold. However, almost one quarter of pupils were unable to score on the tests because their reading and writing skills were too weak. The work seen in classes and in pupils' books reflects this pattern. A small number of pupils are doing well, especially in Year 6, and their rate of progress is very good. But other groups are making, and have made in the past, inadequate progress. Standards in English, especially writing, are not improving quickly enough.

In Key Stage 1, the national assessment results are very low and, unlike in Key Stage 2, there has been no improvement in recent years. The results for reading and writing are exceptionally low. The work seen in classes and in pupils' books during the inspection though is better than the tests results and this is encouraging. Recent changes to staffing in Key Stage 1 and a sharper focus on the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils make are beginning to bear fruit.

For several years, pupils' achievement overall has been inadequate. This is most obvious in pupils' writing in Key Stage 2, where the legacy of underachievement from Key Stage 1 is evident. Too many children struggle to write in coherent sentences, with correct punctuation. Their handwriting and presentation are weak. Although they may understand new ideas being taught they are unable to display their understanding in writing because their basic skills let them down.

Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a flying start and make good progress. Many children in the reception classes are acquiring good phonic skills so they can write simple words and sentences, with full stops and capital letters. They read simple texts. They count and order numbers and add sets to make numbers up to ten and

beyond. Most children are working within the expected range for this age group although few will exceed this.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have been particularly ill served in the past, with far too many making inadequate progress whatever their starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Children like school and have positive attitudes to learning. As one child said, 'I enjoy most lessons because we do lots of interesting things.' Exciting activities such as questioning the local MP stimulate great enthusiasm. When lessons are uninspiring, however, children quickly lose interest. Children almost always behave well, which supports their learning. Relationships between children and with teachers are usually good, as seen when Year 1 children responded proudly to the teacher's praise for their good work. Children's spiritual, moral and social development is satisfactory, but there are too few opportunities for them to learn about other cultures. Attendance is too low, but the school has recently put in place more rigorous systems to tackle the problem.

Children develop a good sense of their own well-being. They know how to make healthy choices in the food they eat and the exercise they take. They say, 'If you are healthy, you do better with your work at school.' Children feel safe at school and they know how to stay safe out of school. They have good opportunities to express their opinions. The school council discusses suggestions from each class and recently decided to introduce 'friendship benches' in the playground. Special responsibilities for the older children give them an understanding of contributing to the community. The low level of many children's basic skills, however, does not equip them well enough for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but there is not enough good teaching to

raise standards quickly enough.

Provision in the Nursery and Reception classes is currently good. Recent changes there have had a positive impact on children's learning. The new arrangements successfully include activities related to the needs of young children that are helping to

increase the pace of their progress. The proactive approach of the headteacher has been a key factor in improving the quality of teaching.

Teaching and learning in Years 1, 2 and 6 are good and are beginning to improve pupils' progress. In the main, lessons in these classes meet the needs of most pupils. Although teaching has improved in Years 3 to 5, it has not yet had sufficient impact on standards because the planning does not take into account the large gaps that exist in pupils' learning. In most of the lessons in these year groups, the planning is too general and does not provide the level of support or challenge needed to ensure that every pupil makes the good progress needed to raise standards. Teachers here need a more thorough understanding of the writing elements of the National Curriculum to improve their assessment and marking of pupils' work and to be able to plan lessons that more accurately meet pupils' needs. Learners with difficulties and/or disabilities are currently making inadequate progress. Recently, information arising from the school's good tracking of pupils' progress has begun to be better used to improve teaching, identify gaps in pupils' learning, and to show what additional help is needed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum, including that in the Foundation Stage, is satisfactory. Following recent changes, the school now makes the expected provision for all subjects and for other activities suitable for primary pupils, including visits to places of interest and opportunities for sport. Literacy and numeracy lessons are given high priority in the timetable. However, because the changes are recent they do not yet enable pupils to achieve the standards expected for their age. Better use needs to be made of the time at the beginning of the school day and of the time allocated to meet the needs of learners with difficulties and/or disabilities. The school's new assessment and planning procedures are still being developed, and are not yet fully effective in making sure every pupil is able to make the best of the opportunities provided. As a result, pupils are not achieving as well as they might. The school has recognised this, and rigorous plans are in hand for improvement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Levels of care are good. Many children need extra support because of difficulties in their lives. All the staff work hard to ensure each child is safe, happy and ready to learn. The children say they feel safe and cared for in school because, 'Someone is

always there to help you if you get hurt or you're unhappy'. This confidence in the care staff provide makes a strong contribution to children's personal development. Staff implement effectively the clear procedures for first aid and child protection, and are vigilant about checks on health and safety.

Until recently, support and guidance for children's learning were inadequate. They are improving steadily. Most teachers now have a better awareness of children's individual needs and what they should be learning next. They provide sound guidance to help them improve, both orally and through marking of work, although this is still not consistent in all classes. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is not effective enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The new headteacher has a very clear and highly accurate overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Other key staff are beginning to appreciate the extent of the task ahead; they have a clearer view of where pupils are not making the progress that they ought. Not all staff, though, have been as ready to accept the need for change and improvement or to accept their role within this process.

The headteacher has drawn up an excellent action plan for improvement and in a very short time has begun to implement a number of changes. One of these is the building of the new management team, which has responsibility for raising achievement throughout the school. Although a very new team, there are some early signs that its focus on standards and pupils' progress is beginning to pay dividends.

The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. The leadership and management of provision for special educational needs has been unsatisfactory but is currently led by the headteacher and the new management team. Governance of the school is now satisfactory. Governors have recognised that until recently they did not fulfil well enough their responsibility to hold the school to account for the progress pupils make. The governing body has only recently put in place a committee structure and a regular timetable for meetings. There are still vacancies on the governing body but this will be remedied in a few weeks when it joins with two others

in preparation for the new-build project.

The school's finances are healthy; a substantial under spend from the current year is

being used to provide extra support for pupils.

The vast majority of parents that completed questionnaires were overwhelmingly positive

about the changes to the school that have taken place recently.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	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	No	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	4	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	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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	Yes
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

Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for being so helpful when we visited your school last week. We really enjoyed talking with you, looking at your work and finding out about the things you like doing.

We think there are lots of good things about your school, but we also discovered some ways in which we think your learning could be better. These are the things we particularly like:

- your school is a friendly place where everyone usually gets on well together
- you are positive about your learning, which helps you to do well in many lessons
- you get on very well together, particularly the older children helping the younger ones
- you have a good understanding about being healthy and staying safe
- in the nursery and Reception classes, you learn particularly well
- you said most lessons are fun and you enjoy the work
- your school is a caring place and you said the staff look after you well
- the school council is doing a good job
- you enjoy having responsibilities, such as being a prefect, and you carry these out well.

We think that many of you could be doing better with your work and so we have asked Ms Michel and the teachers to make sure that lessons help you to learn quickly.

We would like you to do even better in your reading and writing because these are very important skills. If you are all good at reading and writing by the time you leave this school, it means you are more likely to do well at your next school, and we all want you to do well.

Some children are away from school too often. We want you all to be at school as much as possible so that you do well.

We know that you will work hard and try to help Ms Michel and the teachers make things even better for everybody in the school.

We wish you every blessing for the future.