



Nelson Castercliff Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119281
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 291371
Inspection dates 5–6 October 2006
Reporting inspector David Earley

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Marsden Hall Road North
School category	Community		Nelson, Lancashire
Age range of pupils	4–11		BB9 8JJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01282 617627
Number on roll (school)	275	Fax number	01282 693526
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Kim Hubbert
		Headteacher	Mr Ian Chester
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2002		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 5–6 October 2006	Inspection number 291371
--------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average sized school, is in an area of significant social and economic deprivation on the outskirts of Nelson. A high proportion of the pupils claim a free school meal. A small proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and a small number learn English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage is well below what is typical for children of this age.

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 the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. This school is given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to achievement and standards in English, mathematics and science.

The pupils' achievement is inadequate and standards are low. Although the overall effectiveness of the school is inadequate, the headteacher, with advice and support from the local authority and the support of senior managers, staff and governors, is making some early but marked inroads into resolving the causes of the pupils' poor performance. The school has taken action to raise standards and achievement and these are now improving. The school's self-evaluation has helped it to clarify the causes of its weaknesses. The school is providing additional training for teachers in order to improve the quality of teaching and raise standards. This is having some noted success in addressing aspects of teaching and learning where there are inconsistencies. There are examples of outstanding teaching, with high expectations for all pupils and where pupils clearly understand how they can improve. Although teaching remains inadequate in a diminishing proportion of lessons, the school is demonstrating its capacity to sustain its current rate of improvement and eradicate remaining weaknesses.

When children start in the Reception class their attainment is well below what is typical for their age. The good progress and achievement made in the Foundation Stage provides a good platform for improvement and supports the work in Key Stage 1. Here, supported by the recent strategies implemented by the school, achievement is improving in reading and writing, but at a slower rate in mathematics. Despite these improvements in the pupils' progress and achievement, standards at the end of Key Stage 1 remain a little below average. In Key Stage 2, school data and inspection evidence show that the recently implemented strategies to raise standards are now leading to improvements, particularly in the rate at which pupils progress lesson by lesson. However, the school's results in the national tests for 11-year-olds remain low and reflect the pattern of poor achievement that has been common in recent years.

The school has worked hard to ensure that the pastoral care and guidance for pupils are of a satisfactory quality and make an important contribution to their personal development. As a result, they develop positive attitudes to learning and behave well. Furthermore, it provides a sound foundation for the improvements in standards that school data and inspection evidence clearly show. Pupils enjoy coming to school and know about the importance of healthy lifestyles. They say that they feel safe and well looked after. They contribute well to the community and have opportunities to increase their awareness of economic well being. Thorough assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress enable teachers to have a clear knowledge of how well individuals are getting on. However, in a minority of occasions there are instances where this does not consistently lead to a clear understanding by pupils of what they need to do in order to improve their work. The curriculum is broad and balanced with plenty of enrichment. Despite the strong emphasis given to literacy and numeracy there are not

yet enough opportunities provided for pupils to practise their skills in other subjects in order to raise standards further.

The headteacher, well supported by the deputy headteacher, staff and governors, having recognised the need to take action, has had some success in improving the quality of education. The pupils' progress is quickening in response to an improved quality of teaching. The school is demonstrating that it has the capacity to sustain these improvements and raise standards of attainment. Nonetheless, the value for money provided by the school is inadequate.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in English and mathematics at Key Stage 1 and in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 2.
- Add further pace to lessons and make sure that their purpose is clear to the pupils.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in the other subjects of the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Achievement is inadequate and standards are exceptionally low. There is a history of serious underachievement throughout the school. Weaknesses have been identified and, with the support of the local authority, strategies have been put in place to remedy them. This is helping to raise standards and achievement and improve the rate of progress, particularly in English because this has been given priority.

Children enter the Foundation Stage with standards well below those that are typical for pupils of their age, particularly in mathematical and language skills. They make good progress during the Reception year, although standards are slightly below average when they move into Year 1. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and achieve above average standards in reading but do less well in writing and mathematics, where standards are below average. These standards were largely reflected in the results of the 2005 tests in these subjects. School data show that, although pupils made satisfactory progress, results dipped slightly in the 2006 tests because there was a high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or learning difficulties in this cohort. With current satisfactory progress from a very low base, standards are improving, particularly in reading and writing. For example, the proportion of pupils reaching nationally expected levels and above in national tests in reading has risen from a low level in 2002 to an above average level in 2006.

In 2005, the school's results in Year 6 national tests were significantly below average in English, mathematics and science, being amongst the lowest 5% nationally for the last two years. The results in 2006 show similar standards, although they were adversely affected by those obtained by the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in this cohort and high levels of pupil mobility in this particular year group. Standards are currently well below average, but improving. The school's records

show for example, that the proportion of pupils on course to attain the nationally expected standards in the current Year 6 is significantly higher than in previous years.

In both key stages pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are closely supported by the school and external agencies. They make satisfactory progress because of the help they receive in lessons but the large majority do not reach standards appropriate for their ages .

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and show good attitudes to learning. They are polite and friendly, feel safe in school and behave well because they are taught a clear set of values, which emphasis the need for success in work and play. The school has worked hard to improve attendance, which is now broadly average. Pupils readily take on responsibilities and are involved in decision making through their class and school councils. They support their local community, for example, through performing for local residents and raise funds for a range of charities. Pupils are aware of the benefits of regular exercise and healthy eating and know how to keep safe. The school council are particularly proud of their contribution to this. Through weekly savings contributions with a local Building Society and the school council's management of its own budget helps prepare pupils well for their economic future, although they make limited progress in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In around half the lessons, teaching is good and includes a small proportion that is outstanding. This is leading to a better pattern of progress than has been the case in the past. For example, pupils in Year 5 made good progress in their use of descriptive language because the teacher used her good subject knowledge well to challenge thinking and work was well adjusted to differing ability levels. In the outstanding teaching in Year 4, pupils extended their skills in aspects of written and spoken English, because the teaching was lively and pacy and ensured that all pupils knew exactly what they were learning and how they were to go about it. Teachers share their lesson objectives with pupils at the beginning of lessons and check these at the end so that pupils know clearly what they need to do in order to improve. In most lessons, activities are planned to challenge pupils of all abilities and this helps to improve the rate of progress. In the few cases where teaching is inadequate, lessons lack pace and pupils are not clear about what they are expected to learn. Good relationships between adults and pupils and good behaviour management are positive features of most of the teaching. Most pupils are eager to learn because teachers generally engage their interest and challenge them to do better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory, with good features. A broad and balanced curriculum is in place which meets statutory requirements. A good curriculum in the Foundation Stage ensures that children get off to a good start in their education. A strong focus on creativity enriches the curriculum well and is making a positive impact on the good personal development. It enables pupils to grow in confidence and self-esteem and provides plenty of opportunities for pupils to feel a great sense of enjoyment in their work. Special events weeks and visitors are helpful features of the curriculum. These events support pupils' academic achievement particularly in literacy, where occasional opportunities arise for them to write for different purposes. Where these occur, they contribute to the improved progress in reading and writing, but the school does not make explicit the opportunities presented by other subjects in the National Curriculum for regular reinforcement of the pupils' basic skills in English and mathematics.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This aspect of the school's work is satisfactory overall, although some elements such as pastoral care and guidance are good. This is a very caring school, which provides a satisfactory level of support for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language. Each child is valued and children say that they feel safe and happy. Child protection and health and safety arrangements are thoroughly implemented and government recommendations for safeguarding pupils are carefully followed. Parents are well informed about their children's progress and are encouraged to be involved in the life of the school. Pupils' individual journals help parents to communicate with the teachers about progress towards their targets for improvement. The school makes thorough assessments about what pupils can and cannot do and tracks their progress. This information is generally used effectively to make sure pupils understand what they are expected to learn and what they need to do in order to improve. Where this is well established, it gives satisfactory support for pupils' understanding of their academic progress. Although such practice is increasing and teachers are receiving help to implement it, its use has not reached a level where it benefits all pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. In order to counteract a pattern of underachievement among the pupils, the headteacher, supported by the local authority, has implemented a series of well-chosen strategies, which are leading to improving standards and achievement. Training for teachers and a shared and determined approach by senior leaders, staff, governors and the local authority to raising standards

are showing clear signs of success. Although the school's results are still low, especially at the end of Key Stage 2, an improved quality of teaching is resulting in a pattern of more rapid progress in lessons. The school's plan for raising standards is clear and based firmly on a realistic appraisal of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result of further training for teachers, lessons are planned with a clearer sense of purpose, increasing the incidence of good teaching. Close and regular checks by senior staff and the local authority on the quality of teaching are leading to greater consistency in its quality and better progress for the pupils. Staff work well as a team and are committed to improving their teaching and to raising standards. Issues from the previous inspection have been satisfactorily addressed. The school has improved the assessment of foundation subjects and there has been a slight rise in standards by the age of 11 since the previous inspection. There have been several staffing changes since the previous inspection and professional development ensures that the level of challenge in teaching in Key Stage 2 is high in most cases.

Most parents have positive views of the school and governors know the school well. They undertake training in order to extend their skills and share the commitment to raising standards.

Shared commitment to improvement, through realistic self-evaluation and the implementation of strategies to raise standards, gives the school satisfactory capacity to improve.

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

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Nelson Castercliff Community Primary School

Marsden Hall Road North

Nelson

Lancashire

BB9 8JJ

07 October 2006

Dear Children,

Thank you very much for your warm welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and finding out that you enjoy coming to school and feel well cared for and safe. We were very impressed by your politeness and courtesy and by the way you help one another around school.

These are some of the things your school does well:

- You behave well and you get on well with your teachers and with each other;
- Because the school makes good arrangements for them the children in the Foundation Stage do well and those who find learning difficult make the progress you would expect;
- The school cares for you and this helps you to enjoy school;
- Some of the teaching is really good and this is beginning to help you to make better progress.

These are some of the things your school could do better:

- Help you to make a lot of improvements in your English, mathematics and science;
- Make all the teaching in the school as good as the best;
- You could remember to improve your skills in English and mathematics by using them more in other subjects.

Thank you again for your warm welcome,

David Earley

Lead Inspector.