

Avondale Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119294
Local Authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	291374
Inspection date	2 May 2007
Reporting inspector	June Tracey

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	365
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Bentley
Headteacher	Mr John Hodkinson
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2003
School address	Durham Road Darwen Lancashire BB3 1NN
Telephone number	01254 703449
Fax number	01254 760085

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Avondale is larger than most primary schools. It is a popular school that serves a mixed socio-economic community close to the centre of Darwen. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage whose first language is not believed to be English is below average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A smaller proportion than found nationally has statements of special educational need. Children's development on entry to the Reception year is as expected for their age except in language and communication where boys' attainment is slightly below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Avondale is a good school. Pupils are proud of their achievements, as individuals and as members of the whole community. Parents praised the school in their responses to the questionnaire. 'I think Avondale is a fantastic school' was typical of the sentiments expressed. Pupils say that they enjoy their work and the many other activities, which is the impression gained from a visit to the school. This is largely due to good, energetic and proactive leadership that is backed up by a dedicated and enthusiastic team of teaching and non-teaching staff.

On entry, children settle quickly into routines and become familiar with what is expected of them. Plentiful opportunities are provided for children to develop independence. By the end of the Reception year, most children reach the expected levels of development in all areas of learning; some exceed them. Pupils make good progress throughout the school and attain above average standards overall by the time they are eleven. Pupils achieve well. Girls achieve better than boys, particularly in writing. The school is tackling this head-on through planning tasks in writing that emanate from discussion based on topics and resources that stimulate boys' enthusiasm; for example, cars, sport and technology.

The school caters well for pupils' personal development; it safeguards pupils properly through its policies and procedures and encourages healthy habits. Pupils behave well and are very considerate of others. By the time they reach Year 6, they play a significant part in helping the school to run smoothly. Pupils are nurtured to achieve their personal goals, not only in their academic work but in the development of lifelong skills and service to the community. This is demonstrated, for example, in pupils' willingness to give of their own time for public performances in music and dance or to take part in sporting events. These activities, and others, contribute well to pupils' all-round spiritual and personal development. Pupils are not as aware as they should be however of lifestyles in other cultures in British society.

Pupils achieve well because teaching is consistently good throughout the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve equally well, as do pupils who may be experiencing other difficulties in their lives. They receive sensitive support from a teacher experienced in dealing with such needs. Teachers respond quickly when the assessment of pupils' day-to-day work indicates that extra help is required. However, information from whole-school assessment procedures is not yet used systematically to trigger support quickly enough when individual pupils are found not to be making the expected progress.

Pupils' progress towards becoming good citizens is at the heart of the school's work. There is good capacity for further improvement based on the issues in the school development plan. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in boys' writing.
- Make provision to raise pupils' understanding of other cultures in British society.
- Use information from whole-school assessment procedures systematically to provide early intervention for pupils who are not making the expected progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well throughout the school to reach at least above average standards by the time they are eleven. Children's mathematical development on entry to the Reception year is as expected for their age. Language and communication skills are not as well developed, particularly for the boys. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and most reach the early learning goals in all areas of learning; some children exceed them. Pupils continue to make expected progress in Key Stage 1. By the time they are seven, standards in reading are above average. Standards are average in mathematics and writing; girls achieve better than boys, particularly in writing. These standards are reflected in pupils' end of key stage assessments in Year 2. Improving boys' writing is highlighted as a priority in the teaching in all subjects. Information from assessment procedures indicates that the gap between girls' and boys' achievement is narrowing.

Standards are above average overall in English, mathematics and science by the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils achieved the realistic but challenging targets set in 2006. The results in national tests taken in Year 6 have been significantly above average in recent years. They dipped slightly in science in 2006 because not as many pupils as expected reached the higher level (Level 5). Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those whose first language is not English make as good progress as other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good, as is their spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils are not as well informed as they need to be, however, about life in other cultures within British society. Pupils behave well and have good attitudes that permeate and benefit their learning. They say that they enjoy school and they clearly have trust in it to help them achieve as well as they can. This is demonstrated by their good attendance and punctuality, and the absence of exclusions. Pupils understand the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles and, when asked, can describe what they are doing to practise them. Pupils are developing into well-rounded young citizens. They are growing in maturity and self-confidence, attributes that are evident in older pupils' acceptance of responsibility and tenacity in fulfilling their duties. Pupils say that they feel safe in school. Allegations of bullying are few; pupils feel that these are dealt with effectively if they occur. They know where to seek help if needed and value the opportunity to use the 'worry box' if they want to voice concerns anonymously.

Pupils' ability to transfer skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology to other subjects is good preparation for the future. Boys and girls participate enthusiastically in practical activities and in those that open up opportunities for lively debate; for example, in the school council.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are consistently good throughout the school. This is a significant factor in pupils' steady progress from the time they join the school. Teachers have high expectations; they plan well and motivate pupils to become independent learners. The introduction this year

of 'talking partners' has proved very effective in encouraging pupils to explore ideas and reason things out for themselves. The careful choice of relevant material to stimulate discussion prior to writing is bringing about an improvement in the quality and accuracy of pupils' recording skills, particularly for the boys. Examples of skilful questioning were seen during the inspection; teachers used open-ended questions that provided scope for the extension of discussion and allowed them to build on what pupils did, or did not, know. Information from marking and assessment in class is used well to target and support pupils in their day-to-day work. Data from whole-school assessment procedures is not used systematically to instigate intervention quickly enough when, for any reason, individuals or groups of pupils are found not to be making the expected progress. Pupils with identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well taught in small groups according to their specific, individual needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets pupils' needs well and satisfies statutory requirements. The school is innovative and far-sighted in that planning takes account of differences in pupils' learning, such as the boys' writing, and the need to provide a wide variety of challenging activities to satisfy pupils' wide-ranging interests. This it does well; for example, through the variety of lunchtime and after-school activities. All staff give generously of their time to engage pupils' enthusiasm; in music and dance, for example, pupils receive a high level of praise for their public performances at various venues. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those experiencing other difficulties, gain pleasure from joining in these activities. The school identifies and provides well in the classroom and beyond for pupils who are gifted and talented; for example, through the opportunity to work on an engineering project.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. High priority is given to safeguarding pupils and statutory procedures are in place well known by all staff. Links with outside agencies and other providers are very good; they support not only pupils, but families and carers. Child protection procedures and risk assessments are carried out responsibly. Pupils receive good guidance on how to improve their work and reach the targets set. Achievement is underpinned by good support systems and parents' involvement in their children's learning. Added to this is the strong back-up from the 'Parent, Teacher and Friends Association' (PTFA) for school and community events, which is highly valued by all the staff. Planned intervention to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of pupils on the borderline of National Curriculum levels appropriate to their age is effective in raising their attainment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership, management and governance are good. The headteacher's leadership is highly respected by pupils, staff and parents. It is progressively driving the school forward to embrace new initiatives at a realistic pace. The leadership team and middle managers work well together in supporting all aspects of the school's work. Good communication and consultation with the staff leads to accurate self-evaluation and decisive action. Teachers and non-teaching staff are aware of the school's priorities and know exactly what needs to be done to achieve them.

They are receptive to training and professional development and willingly trial suggestions at the earliest opportunity. Improvement since the previous inspection is good; the school tackles issues swiftly and constructively as and when they arise. Governors have a good understanding of how well the school is performing and what could be improved. They ensure that finances are spent prudently, reflecting the school's most immediate needs.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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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
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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	2
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	2

The quality of provision

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

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

2 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Avondale Primary School, Darwen, BB3 1NN

Thank you for your warm welcome. In the short time that I spent with you, I learned such a lot about your school. I understand why you have such pride in belonging to Avondale. It helps you to achieve well in your academic work and in other aspects of your personal development.

What impressed me in the time that I spent with you? Initially, it was the way you set about the day's work, efficiently and without fuss. You settled into lessons, listening and responding well to your teachers' questioning. I liked how you shared ideas, argued and reasoned with your talking partners. This helped you to develop and justify your own opinions. You appeared to really enjoy talking and working together practically. Don't forget though that writing and recording evidence of your work are equally important. Up to now, girls have achieved slightly better than boys in writing. Your teachers are trying to help you narrow the gap, so, boys, there is the challenge for you. Overall, you reach good standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6 but there is always room for further improvement.

You probably noticed that I spent a lot of time looking at the work on display in classrooms and corridors. This provided me with valuable information about the quality of your work and how you celebrate success in extra-curricular activities; such as music, drama, dance and sport. The range of these is wide, providing something for everyone. All you do in school is preparing you to be good citizens in the future. I think that you are already showing good community spirit in your school life but I am not sure that you know enough yet about the wealth of cultures that make up British society.

Your headteacher and staff are anxious that all of you should achieve as well as you can. Most of you do but there are times when a few of you do not make as much progress as expected. I have asked senior staff to respond quickly to help you if records show that your work over time is not progressing as quickly as it should.

Thank you once again and very best wishes for your future success.

Yours sincerely

June Tracey

Lead Inspector