

Sudell Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119295
Local Authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	291375
Inspection dates	10–11 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Andrew Saunders

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	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Atkin
Headteacher	Mrs Laura Pooles
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2003
School address	Sudell Road Darwen Lancashire BB3 3EB
Telephone number	01254 703440
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British origin but there are a few pupils for whom English is not their first language. The number of pupils entitled to claim a free school meal is well above the national average. Regeneration in the locality has resulted in the demolition of areas of housing and a falling school roll. The area has a very high degree of social deprivation. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. The school recently became part of a primary strategy Learning Network group.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This school provides a good quality of education. The school has a settled staff, morale is high and everyone shares the same vision and commitment to improvement. The school has a strong focus on raising standards and sets high expectations for pupils and teachers. Teaching is good. It is well focused and the curriculum is being enriched and adapted to help ensure pupils' enjoyment.

Pupils achieve well and standards are average by the time they are ready for secondary school. Children start school in Reception with skills that are below those expected for their age, and boys' skills are well below. The children make good progress in most of the early learning goals because of good provision. Standards are broadly average for their age when they leave the Foundation Stage. Pupils benefit, in particular, from the teachers' effective use of the physical environment, which helps to foster good learning.

In Key Stage 1, the school's results of national assessments have dipped recently, because the profile of year groups has changed as numbers have fallen. Because the current Year 2 includes a substantial proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, standards among this group of pupils are below average. Nevertheless, these pupils make good progress and achieve well given their starting points in Year 1. Considerable efforts made to raise standards at Key Stage 2 have meant that the results of the 2007 Year 6 tests in English, mathematics and science have improved compared to previous years. Even so, standards of literacy and numeracy could be higher still.

Teaching and learning are good overall and some lessons are outstanding. Learning is good because pupils are motivated and the teachers are enthusiastic. Teachers make lessons stimulating by providing practical tasks and emphasising oral work, which leads to good progress. There is some really good practice in providing feedback to pupils, but it is not consistently applied in all lessons. Thus, teachers do not always ensure that pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve their work and move on to the next level. Pupils enjoy varied and interesting lessons because the curriculum is enhanced by visitors; such as, journalists, authors and musicians, who help to put writing into action.

This is a happy school because pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils feel safe in school and well looked after. They understand the importance of being fit and healthy and contribute to the school's community in many ways; for example, serving as play leaders and taking part in assemblies and fund-raising activities. Their views are seen as increasingly important in the running of the school. The school promotes pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Combined with rising standards in Key Stage 2, this means pupils are increasingly well prepared for the future. The care and welfare of pupils are strengths of the school. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about what the school does for their children and pupils say they enjoy school very much.

Leadership and management are good because self-evaluation and the introduction of useful strategies have helped to raise standards in Key Stage 2. Sharing of information between staff means that senior leaders know their school and the pupils very well. However, the school needs to build on this by using electronic systems to make pupils' progress easier to track. Managers and governors work well together to raise standards and promote enjoyment. Consequently, the school has a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Particularly in literacy and numeracy, ensure that pupils consistently know the next steps to take to improve their work.
- Make greater use of electronic systems to help teachers track and record pupils' targets and progress and to identify trends in standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are average. When children start school, their skills are below average and boys' skills are well below average. During the Foundation Stage, children make good progress and most meet the early learning goals expected for their age by the time they enter Key Stage 1. Current inspection evidence shows that, during Key Stage 1, pupils continue to make good progress and attain broadly average standards. At the end of Key Stage 1, the results of national assessments have recently been below average because a large majority of pupils in Year 2 had learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress and standards are average and rising. This is because strategies such as critical thinking have been put in place to help raise standards. These have been very effective; for example, in boys' writing and science.

Pupils make good progress in lessons. A strong emphasis on practical and oral work is having an impact, as shown by the articulate way pupils talk about their written work and recently improved Key Stage 2 results. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported individually in lessons with practical help and make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, is outstanding. It is rooted in the school's positive ethos, in assemblies and the strong team spirit that unites the community.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and their behaviour is exemplary in lessons and around school. The school has a purposeful working atmosphere because staff have high expectations and emphasise the development of pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Pupils are polite, courteous, show respect for one another and enjoy positive and trusting relationships with adults. They know right from wrong and have excellent attitudes to learning, which are extended through highly successful teamwork; such as, the house system. Pupils are eager to share ideas and help each other with their academic work and sporting activity; activities which will serve them well in later life. As a result of the school's effective strategies and consistent effort, attendance has risen and is now similar to the national average.

Pupils show compassion and awareness of others' needs; for example, through the charities they support and the ways that older pupils help younger ones. They say they feel safe in school and that the school takes seriously incidents of bullying or harassment, which are dealt with promptly. Pupils understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and are encouraged successfully to keep fit by taking part in regular physical activities and eating healthy foods. This has helped the school to gain the Activemark.

Pupils are keen to take responsibility and play an active part in school life. Members of the school council say they want to stand again and feel they have made a difference for the whole

school. The apprentice play leaders are also keen to apply for the job of play leader in September. The pupils are proud of their school and appreciate the ways in which they can make their views known.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and some outstanding lessons were seen throughout the school.

Lessons are characterised by good relationships and high expectations for pupils' behaviour and work. Activities are planned to meet pupils' learning needs and the staff are enthusiastic and keen to find out how pupils learn most effectively. This means lessons are fun and lively with imaginative, practical approaches. Pupils enjoy lessons and, in turn, there is a positive atmosphere, which leads to good progress. A particular strength of teaching is the use teachers make of computer-operated whiteboards to motivate the pupils. Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves and to work collaboratively; for example, in the fortnightly team challenges. Typically, teachers' good knowledge and a range of strategies enable them to develop pupils' subject-specific skills. Time is used effectively to keep pupils on track; for instance, through a brisk series of time-limited activities.

Teachers make good use of data to set pupils targets in literacy and numeracy which are prominently displayed in classrooms. These are used to inform lesson content but, even so, not all teachers ensure that pupils are clear about the next steps they need to take to improve their work and reach higher standards.

A confident team of learning assistants supports pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They are sensitive and unobtrusive in their support. They work very well alongside teachers to provide practical help and guidance so that pupils make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum, including that for the Foundation Stage, is good. It is rightly underpinned by imaginative and practical learning activities that are often linked through cross-curricular themes. These approaches work well for pupils, but are particularly successful in helping boys to take a positive interest in learning where previously they found it hard to sustain concentration. Special events, visits and visitors, including days devoted to themes, such as the 'Big Writing Day', add richness as well as giving pupils opportunities to make their learning come alive through first-hand experience. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, with individual plans and support enabling them to enjoy a comparable curriculum to that of their peers.

In the Foundation Stage, pupils enjoy a wide range of challenging activities to help them develop basic skills. This is combined with a strong emphasis on developing social and learning skills, which leads to pupils settling into school well, developing very good attitudes to school and making good progress. The outdoor area is used well for imaginative play that has good links with class activity.

A particular strength is a very good programme of after-school clubs, which include sports, music, drama, science, and creative activities. Most pupils take part at some time and they are

eager to say how much they enjoy them. This deepens their learning and often develops their hidden talents.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a caring school. Staff know the pupils very well and are fully committed to their welfare. Pupils are safe and well cared for and develop their self-assurance. Safeguarding and risk assessments are in place. Relationships with parents and other agencies, such as sports clubs, another local school in Blackburn and the local Primary Strategy Learning Network, are supportive.

The behaviour and learning policy teaches pupils about acceptable behaviour and to show respect and concern for others. Strategies introduced to manage behaviour have been effective and pupils said that 'everyone is nice to each other'.

The support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and ensures that they make the progress they should. The tracking of pupils' progress enables the school to identify individual targets and to support pupils' learning; this contributes well to rising standards and achievement. For example, meetings help to bring different views about pupils together. Some of the tracking is handwritten and its format holds back the teachers' and managers' ability to check pupils' progress quickly; for example, the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. There is a strong team approach to management, which means that the senior leaders speak with one voice. The school is well led by the headteacher, who is ably supported by the deputy headteacher. Involvement of the rest of the staff means that everyone has a shared vision. The senior leadership team have accurately identified the important matters for improvement and moved the school forward with a clear direction.

Governance is good because governors have an accurate picture of the school and are developing their roles to provide helpful levels of challenge and support. The relationship between all adults and pupils creates strong teamwork. The school's leadership and governors have been particularly successful in bringing about positive behaviour and boosting self-confidence, which has resulted in outstanding personal development and pupils' well-being.

Self-evaluation and monitoring of all aspects of the school's work by the headteacher and deputy headteacher ensure that the staff have a very accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Measures to improve standards in English and science in Key Stage 2 have been effective. Equal opportunities are promoted vigorously and all pupils are included fully in what the school provides.

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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	3
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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	1
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

12 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sudell Primary School, Darwen, BB3 3EB

Thank you for welcoming us to your school this week. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing you working so well in lessons and enjoying school. Many of you said you think your school is a good school and we agree with you.

These are the things we thought were particularly good in your school.

- Your teachers work hard to make sure lessons are fun and that you have interesting work to do.
- You have lots of chances to talk about your work, which is helping you to write better stories.
- Your success in your tests is getting better. Compared to other pupils in similar schools, you are doing well.
- Everyone in your school works as part of a team to keep making things even better.
- You are very well behaved around school and are kind to each other, which makes your school a pleasant place to be and helps you enjoy being there.
- Those of you who find learning difficult get good support to help you learn things like reading, spelling and how to do calculations.
- The adults in your school are good at listening to what you think and you are becoming confident in telling them what you would like to see happening.
- Your headteacher and other leaders are good at knowing how to make sure you have the best possible opportunities to learn.

There are two things we think your school should do.

- To help you do even better, particularly in literacy and numeracy, it is important that you know exactly how to improve your work in all lessons.
- To use computers to keep track of what you each need to do and how well you are doing in those areas.

Keep listening to the advice of your teachers and working at your targets so that you can do even better in your tests next year.

With best wishes for your future

Yours sincerely

Andrew Saunders, Michael Haynes

Inspectors