

Mereside Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119345
Local Authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	301679
Inspection date	9 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Shirley Herring

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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Brian Cooper
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Burton
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2003
School address	Langdale Road Blackpool Lancashire FY4 4RR
Telephone number	01253 761531
Fax number	01253 698274

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

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The school was visited by one inspector for one day. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: academic achievement, teaching and learning, the curriculum, the quality of care, guidance and support, as well as leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation document, national published assessment data, the school's records and procedures, parents' questionnaires, observation of the school at work and discussions with staff and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Mereside is an average sized primary school situated on a large housing estate on the outskirts of this seaside town. The area suffers from high levels of disadvantage and pupil mobility is high. More than half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. Almost all of the pupils are from a White British background. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is high at more than double the national average. A new children's centre, adjacent to the school, is nearing completion.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Mereside is a good school. The outstanding level of care and support it provides for pupils has contributed well to their good behaviour and progress. The school has a good reputation in the area and many parents remarked on the high quality of care, the welcoming atmosphere and the good teaching, which help their children enjoy learning.

Children enter the Nursery with a range of skills which overall are much lower than is usual for their age. They make good progress during their time in school, but standards are below average when they leave Year 6. Pupils achieve well in Key Stage 1 because of the consistently good teaching. In the 2006 national tests, standards in Year 2 were below average, though standards have improved over the previous five years, particularly in writing. This is due to the priority the school has placed on this aspect. The number of pupils reaching the expected level was close to average in reading and writing though very few pupils reached the higher Level 3 in any aspect. Performance in 2007 showed a similar picture.

Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2 because of continued good teaching and pupils' improving behaviour and attitudes to school. In the 2006 national tests standards for Year 6 pupils were below average overall, though standards in English improved. The number achieving the higher Level 5 was low. There was a considerable fall in standards in science, but prompt action taken by the leadership team to improve standards in science led to a better performance in 2007. The 2007 results in English were similar to the previous year. In mathematics, there was an improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected level, but the proportion reaching the higher Level 5 was still low. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the exceptional level of care and support they receive. Many pupils start and leave the school other than at the usual times and this sometimes can interrupt their progress. The school's thorough records of pupils' progress indicate that pupils who have been in the school since Year 1, on average achieve well.

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils say they enjoy the lessons and the after-school clubs. Extensive efforts by the school, including the attendance key worker, have helped to improve attendance, though this is still below average. The school's clear behaviour policy is consistently applied by all staff and is well understood by the pupils and this has led to a considerable improvement in behaviour. The good effects of the behaviour policy are strongly supported by the opening of the learning support units in school. These have been instrumental in helping to reduce significantly the number of days lost because of exclusions in a year, from 134 days to 38. The good relationships in school help pupils to feel safe, and pupils have a good understanding of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle through initiatives such as Health Education Day. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are gaining a good understanding of other cultures through links with schools in Botswana and Ethiopia and have welcomed teachers from these schools to Blackpool. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community as school councillors and as monitors. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for future life through improving computing skills, though their literacy and numeracy skills could be better. The school has excellent links with a wide variety of partners to promote pupils' well-being, including other schools at home and abroad, local businesses and sporting organisations as well as other education and welfare professionals.

Teaching is good overall. A strong factor throughout the school is the liveliness of lessons that enhance pupils' enjoyment of learning. Clear behaviour sanctions are systematically applied so

behaviour is good and learning is effective. The generous number of support staff are well briefed and contribute well to pupils' learning in class and in small groups. In most lessons work is planned to meet the needs of different groups, though more could be expected of more able pupils.

The curriculum is good. The school places great emphasis on developing the basic skills of literacy and numeracy whilst managing to maintain the wider curriculum, for example, all pupils from Year 2 learn French and Spanish. There is a good range of after-school activities to support learning. The school choir is accomplished, being named as the Blackpool Choir of the Year in 2004. Residential trips for pupils in Key Stage 2 are popular and enhance pupils' confidence and social skills. A good programme for personal, social and health education contributes well to pupils' good personal development.

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. All the recommended procedures for safeguarding pupils are firmly in place. The school works closely with families to provide extensive support for vulnerable children. This extends well beyond what could be expected, for example providing support on Christmas Day. The school's expertise in this area is recognised by the authority and the special units based in the school successfully help pupils from other schools. There are very good systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress and these have been used well in helping to set targets for improvement. The pupils know what they need to do to improve, be it learning tables or remembering full stops. They are also given clear guidance as to what is acceptable behaviour, enabling pupils to get on well together.

Leadership and management are good. The school has devoted tremendous resources and energy to providing high quality care and support for pupils, leading to improvements in behaviour and good achievement for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Attendance has also improved though the school recognises this requires constant vigilance to maintain and extend these improvements. The strong leadership team has the raising of standards at the top of their list of responsibilities and sets challenging targets for the school, pupils and staff each year. Actions taken to raise standards in writing and science have led to improved progress in these subjects. The school has identified the need to help more able pupils achieve as well as they can, but the actions taken have not yet had an impact on raising standards at the higher levels. Governance is good. Governors are very supportive of the school and have a good understanding of what the school needs to do to move forward. The improvements in behaviour and standards since the last inspection and the school's accurate evaluations of its work indicate it has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children enter the Nursery with a range of skills which are generally well below what is typical for their age. They make satisfactory progress in the Nursery and Reception years, though overall they do not reach the nationally expected goals in any area of learning by the time they leave Reception. The school rightly places significant priority on children's personal, social and emotional development and children make good progress in developing personal and social skills.

Teaching is satisfactory overall and children make sound gains in their learning. Nursery and Reception children are taught in one Foundation Stage Unit. When children are working with a teacher, individually or in small groups, good use is made of the good assessment information so that tasks are well matched to the children's stage of development. However, children's play

activities do not always fully support their learning because they are not well structured, nor do they take enough account of children's different stages of development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards overall, but particularly for more able pupils by ensuring they are fully challenged in lessons.
- Ensure that children's play activities in Foundation Stage are well structured and take account of their different stages of development in order to maximise learning.
- Improve attendance.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	3

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?	1

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

9 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mereside Primary School, Blackpool, FY4 4RR.

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your to see how well you are learning. It was very clear to me when I saw you in class how much you enjoy school. The teachers must spend a lot of time to make sure your lessons are interesting and you play your part by working hard and behaving well.

I agree with you and your parents that Mereside is a good school. It takes excellent care of you all and you told me how safe that makes you feel. There is always an adult at hand to give you extra help when you need it and so you are making good progress.

When I inspect a school I make suggestions as to how even good schools could be better. These are that:

- more of you are helped to reach Level 5 in your tests in English, mathematics and science
- changes are made to some of the activities in the Foundation Stage Unit to help everyone learn as much as they can.

You can help by trying your best to come to school every day.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Herring

Lead inspector