

Lever Edge Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105158
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	308783
Inspection date	20 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Terry Holland HMI

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	513
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Phillips
Headteacher	Mrs F Barry
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2003
School address	Lever Edge Lane Bolton Lancashire BL3 3HP
Telephone number	01204 333677
Fax number	01204 333678

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector investigated the following issues: the achievement of pupils and the progress they make, particularly in Key Stage 2; the impact of leadership and management on the school's awareness of the performance of pupils and the school as a whole; the pupils' personal development and well-being, and their care, guidance and support. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form (SEF); national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, policies and minutes; observation of the school at work; interviews with members of staff, pupils and governors; and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work, including the work of the specialist speech and language unit, were not investigated in detail. However, the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its SEF, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Lever Edge is a larger than average primary school serving an area of social and economic disadvantage in the south of Bolton. A much higher than average proportion of pupils is entitled to a free school meal. Over two thirds of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion is rising. The percentage of pupils whose first language is not English is very high and the numbers of asylum seekers and refugees being admitted to the school is increasing. The proportion of pupils who have a learning difficulty and/or disability is also above the national average. The number of pupils joining and leaving the school, particularly during Key Stage 2, is higher than in most schools. The school has a speech and language unit catering for 16 pupils drawn from schools across Bolton. The school has achieved a significant number of awards including the Schools Achievement Award (three times), Basic Skills Quality Mark, Investors in People, ArtsMark, ActiveMark and Healthy Schools status. The school has been selected by Bolton as a Leading Edge School, and to take the lead on the Basic Skills Quality Mark and self-evaluation with schools in the authority.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Lever Edge Primary is an outstanding school that provides excellent support and a very good education for its pupils. This is a school where every child really does matter. It does all in its power to maximise the opportunities for its pupils and their chances in life. The headteacher, staff and governors provide a safe and secure environment which both supports and challenges the children to do their best and achieve their potential. This helps pupils thrive as individuals and develop the skills and attitudes necessary to work together very effectively. Pupils respond positively and demonstrate respect and tolerance to others. They make good progress academically and excellent progress in their social development.

Parents recognise this and are overwhelmingly positive in their support for the school. One parent wrote that 'Lever Edge and its staff are first class.' Another described it as 'a wonderful school where the headteacher and staff do a fantastic job and are very dedicated to helping the children to learn'. It is the strength of leadership and management that is the key to the school's success. The systems in place for the school to monitor and evaluate its performance are exemplary. As a result, it is highly responsive to the changing needs of the pupils in the school, and to areas where its performance can be improved. It acts quickly and effectively to bring about that improvement. The school's self-evaluation is very rigorous. So much so that, in the light of a partial dip in standards and achievement in 2006, and a belief that any school needs to improve further, it modestly judged its overall effectiveness as good. Whilst it is right that it can still improve, it is precisely this level of critical analysis, and awareness of where improvements are possible and how to achieve them, that makes this an outstanding school and one which has excellent capacity to improve further.

Pupils enter the Nursery and Reception with skills and knowledge that are generally well below what is expected for their age, particularly in language, communication and mathematical skills, and in their personal, social, creative and physical development. They make good or very good progress in their creative development, communication and thinking, all aspects of their personal, social and physical development and in some aspects of their mathematical skills. By the end of the Foundation Stage they are performing at or above the expected levels in all these areas. However, given their low starting points, they are still below expected levels in key aspects of their language and mathematical skills and in their knowledge and understanding of the world.

In Key Stage 1 pupils make very good progress and by the age of 7 reach standards that are above average overall. Most pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 2, particularly when the number of pupils who enter the school in Key Stage 2 but whose performance does not count in statistical analysis of achievement is taken into account. By the age of 11, pupils have consistently reached standards that are in line with national averages. In 2006 there was a dip in performance in English at Key Stage 2, particularly in writing, but records show that this was due to circumstances that the school could not predict. It has acted quickly to address the issues that emerged. Standards rose in 2007 and were above average overall. Records show that the achievement and progress made by these pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, was above average. The school's key performance targets were reached or exceeded.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding because the care, guidance and support provided by the school are also outstanding. Both are exceptionally strong features of this school. This stems from the very good beginnings established in the Foundation Stage

which rapidly helps pupils relate well to each other and to become interested and motivated learners. By the age of 11 most pupils are confident, articulate and comfortable in the company of adults and other pupils. For many this represents outstanding progress given their personal and social skills when they enter the school and the barriers that early language difficulties can present to them.

When asked, pupils emphasised that everyone in the school has positive attitudes and that everyone has a chance to succeed. They feel safe in school and, although one or two expressed a little concern over some rough and tumble in the playground, they recognise that members of staff can be relied upon to help and support them. They really appreciate the opportunities they are given to take responsibility and to support each other, particularly through befriending and helping those new to the school or who are feeling lonely or unhappy. Pupils understand the need for active lifestyles and healthy eating and value the school's emphasis on health and exercise. The before-school fitness clubs and 'play leaders' scheme where older pupils run 'fun' sporting activities for the infants at lunch times came in for special mention. They appreciate the healthy lunches provided by the school and understand what makes a balanced diet.

Pupils are very clear about, and respond positively to, the school's high expectations of behaviour and the need for tolerance and respect of others' beliefs and cultures. They understand and accept the need for sanctions and recognise that they are applied fairly. Pupils feel that their opinions are valued and acted upon. They understand the process of holding democratic elections to select members of the school council and value the opportunity for older pupils to take responsibility for representing the views of the youngest pupils at the council. They recognise that their views have contributed to a number of significant developments in the life of the school and its environment.

Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are robust and very effective. The school knows its pupils well, enabling them to be both nurtured and challenged in equal measure. The systems that underpin this quality of support are complex, but highly effective. They work well because of the closely knit management systems and very effective integration of academic and pastoral care that are in place, and the close working, commitment and dedication of all those involved. Good links with external agencies and services help to support pupils who are most in need. The school has made significant efforts to improve attendance. It has been successful. Overall attendance is now broadly in line with the national average, though the school continues to battle with the problem of some parents who choose to take their children on extended holidays.

The school provides a good curriculum which is regularly reviewed in order to meet the changing needs of its pupils and local and national initiatives. Pupils appreciate the many extra-curricular activities provided, including the wide variety of school clubs and activities, and opportunities to visit places of interest. This contributes significantly to pupils' enjoyment and achievements and to their personal development and well-being. Provision for literacy and numeracy is, rightly, a priority but the school is actively developing its provision for all subjects and for the implementation of the new Early Years and Foundation Stage curriculum in 2008.

The school's outstanding performance management and monitoring systems mean that it has a firm handle on the quality of teaching and learning across the school. The inspection confirms the school's evidence that the overall quality is good, with some that is outstanding. The strategies and actions for improving all teaching are rigorous and pertinent. In the sample of lessons observed, teachers made learning challenging but fun. They know their pupils well and provide learning activities that are of interest to them and which challenge them to think. They now monitor the progress of pupils carefully and increasingly effectively. They ensure that

pupils understand the assessment and target-setting process. Pupils know their individual targets and what they must do to achieve these.

The headteacher, staff and governors have a common sense of purpose and are very effectively focused on improving standards and promoting the well-being of pupils. The emphasis given to developing the confidence of all pupils contributes significantly to the school's success. The school's very thorough and rigorous evaluation and monitoring procedures demonstrate high expectations and include challenging targets in all areas of school life, including those for all members of staff. The outstanding contribution of the headteacher has been in helping staff at all levels, but particularly those with responsibility for areas of the curriculum and the key stages, to take an active and dynamic role in the leadership and management of the school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The quality of provision for the Foundation Stage is good, with a number of outstanding features. It is very well led and managed. Its work forms the bedrock for the outstanding personal development and well-being of pupils and underpins the success of the school as a whole.

What the school should do to improve further

No significant areas for improvement have been identified of which the school was not already aware and already taking appropriate action.

Nevertheless, given the school's leading status and outstanding performance in self-evaluation, it could now take a lead for others in identifying further ways to measure the impact of its work on pupils' personal development and well-being.

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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?	1
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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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	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	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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

Inspection of Lever Edge Primary School, Bolton, BL3 3HP

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed being in your school and talking with you. A number of your parents also completed a questionnaire to give me their views of the school. This was most helpful, so please thank them for me.

I think Lever Edge is an outstanding school that serves you really well. Some of the most impressive things I found were:

- the leadership and management of Mrs Barry and others, and the hard work of all the staff in helping you develop personally and socially
- the care, guidance and support you receive to help each one of you to achieve your full potential
- the extra opportunities the school gives you to develop your interests, and to keep fit and healthy
- the way the school has high expectations of you in the way you behave towards others and in what you can achieve. You behave very well and are friendly and kind to each other
- the good progress you make during your time at school.

I know this will come as no surprise to you. You and your parents told me that you enjoy school. You also know that the headteacher and all members of staff work very hard to keep you safe and to make lessons interesting and enjoyable. They are very committed to making your school a special place and they are always trying to improve further.

You are playing your part in this. Well done!

With very best wishes for your future.