

Ferney Lee Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 107478 |
| Local Authority | Calderdale |
| Inspection number | 309405 |
| Inspection dates | 3–4 April 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Roger Gill |

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

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|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 141 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Caroline Beardsmore |
| Headteacher | Mrs Brogan-Hewitt |
| Date of previous school inspection | 16 March 2004 |
| School address | Ferney Lee Road Todmorden Lancashire OL14 5NR |
| Telephone number | 01706 812412 |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a relatively small school that admits pupils from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, mainly disadvantaged. Numbers of pupils have fallen over the last three years in line with the local demographic trend. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is above average: many of these pupils are learning English as an additional language. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is more than is found typically. More pupils enter and leave the school mid-way through their education than is usual. In 2007, the school gained Investor in People, the Healthy Schools Award, Eco Schools (Silver) and Activemark for its work in physical education. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed since the last inspection. There have been some considerable staffing changes in the last two years. The local authority funds a social inclusion provision entitled Pathways.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school, which has a good knowledge of what it is like and how it needs to improve. It is getting better quickly now that staffing is stable and pupils' behaviour is far more positive. Parents, who in general have a favourable view of the school, can see the results from the many measures put in place to improve the education provided. 'Children are well balanced and tolerant of others, which reflects the effect of the school.' This is a typical opinion held by parents about a school in which pupils' personal development is good owing to the beneficial care and support they receive.

Pupils' enthusiasm for school gleams when they talk about all the interesting things that there are to do in school. They love learning Spanish, keeping healthy through all the sport on offer and learning when lessons grab their attention in a lively way. They appreciate being able to contribute to school life through the school council and believe that the Befrienders play a very useful role in ensuring that relationships are good. It is often the Pathways programme and the Wild Garden that gain the most praise from pupils. Their self-esteem blossoms owing to the very well considered support given by the Pathways team. Moreover, the Wild Garden is a superb resource that provides wonderful opportunities for academic and personal development. Pupils feel much safer now that behaviour has improved in the playground.

Standards are average by the end of Year 6. They can vary considerably from year to year because of the relatively small numbers of pupils in each cohort and the movement of pupils in and out of school. This annual variation also applies to pupils' achievement. There were times, as in 2006 and 2007, when achievement was good. This was due to the smaller proportion of pupils who struggled with their learning and because these older pupils suffered less from the changes in staffing. Currently, standards in Year 6 are about average and pupils are achieving soundly. The school is correct in judging that standards could be higher. Previous difficulties in teaching caused gaps in pupils' learning, which are being tackled. Despite some good teaching at the moment throughout the school, pupils are only achieving satisfactorily because, in many cases, they are still making up for lost ground.

Improvements in teaching have arisen from the appointment of permanent staff, including the deputy headteacher. Furthermore, involvement in the local authority's scheme for improving schools has given teaching a boost in helping to provide a soundly tailored curriculum for pupils' needs and a more accurate assessment of their current standards. The school has implemented an acceptable method for tracking pupils' progress, which gives some helpful information about how individual pupils are learning. However, the information is not used rigorously enough by subject leaders and senior managers to determine the precise effect of teaching and identify which pupils should be making better progress.

There are some good features of teaching, which fire pupils' enthusiasm for learning. For example, poems, in the shape of tulips, were created in Year 3 after pupils had studied them outside and taken digital photographs of them for closer reference in the classroom. 'Mathematics is fun' is the claim of pupils in Years 4 and 5 because learning such as that about fractions was achieved through a fantasy story about 'shrinking Sheila' who changed her shape and size at will. Teaching has its drawbacks. The school has identified these, but there has not been time to rectify them. Despite the satisfactory progress of most pupils, those capable of above average attainment are not always challenged enough with demanding activities. Their progress equates with that of average attainers and no more. There are some good examples

of target setting, particularly in Year 6, but generally pupils are not fully aware of what they are aiming at and how they will know when they have succeeded. Marking is not always precise enough about how learning could be improved. Similarly, discussion in lessons sometimes fails to help pupils talk about their learning and how it could have been better.

The headteacher and governors have guided the school well recently; they have announced the way forward clearly and with conviction. Parents have picked up on this renewed sense of purpose, describing the efforts given to pupils with special educational needs as 'beyond the call of duty.' Accurate and effective self-evaluation has put the school back on course with tangible results in teaching and behaviour. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall because it is too early to see the full benefit from the developments that have taken place. Nevertheless, the improvements indicate a good capacity to improve even further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children's knowledge and skills are below those expected for their age when they join the Foundation Stage. They make satisfactory progress and most end their year in Reception just below the expected levels for their age, except in reading where they meet national expectations. In 2007, children achieved slightly better in literacy and numeracy than they did in personal and creative development. Provision for play inside and outside the classrooms lacked organisation and resources. This restricted children's ability to act out their make believe ideas and practise learning informally. Sound leadership and management have tried hard to rectify these shortcomings with some early successes. Opportunities for play have been improved and now children play on their own and in small groups with confidence and imagination. It is too early to see the full benefit from the new provision, which is why the Foundation Stage is currently satisfactory rather than good. Occasionally though, teaching which is satisfactory acquires a first-rate aspect. For example, children had a wonderful time in the school grounds looking for signs of spring and came back into the classroom bursting to relate their experiences. They were able to communicate their ideas succinctly, owing to skilful questioning by the adults.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more challenging work for pupils capable of higher than average attainment.
- Improve the use of information from assessments to pinpoint where further

improvements in teaching and pupils' learning should be made.

- Improve pupils' understanding of what they need to do to reach the next level in their learning.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall performance is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted Inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards can vary considerably yearly depending on the make up of the Year 6 cohort. In 2006, standards were well above average and in 2007 they were below it. However, in both years pupils did well to reach those levels. By contrast, achievement this year is satisfactory: standards are about average in Year 6. A similar picture exists throughout the school. Some good progress in individual lessons is not translated into good achievement over time. This is because assessment of pupils' progress is not used sharply enough. Supportive provision for

pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables them to make similar progress to other pupils. This also applies to those learning English as an additional language. It is pupils capable of above average attainment who tend not to do as well as they could. For example, there are very few pupils in Year 2 who reach above average levels.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school a lot more now that the behaviour has improved. Some pupils reacted badly to the spate of temporary teaching; it took time for them to regain their poise. A few pupils still find it hard to control themselves. Nevertheless, the school has this in hand and so behaviour is generally good. Pupils feel safe and appreciate the emphasis on health and keeping fit. They enjoy taking part in school life. There is a marked pride in being a school councillor, a befriender or acting as a reading buddy. Attendance is broadly average. This has been a hard won success, partly due to the falling levels of extended leave. The acquisition of academic skills for future life is satisfactory, but could be better. Spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. Multi-cultural understanding is well developed, particularly because pupils benefit from the school's good mix of ethnic backgrounds.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching generally contains appropriate aims, which are translated into interesting activities that appeal to most pupils. Efforts to include all pupils in learning are vigorous. For example, those who falter owing to emotional or social reasons are able to take part in the Pathways programme. This support has a dramatic effect in helping pupils to get back on track. A combination of teamwork among the adults involved, the beneficial use of electronic whiteboards and activities that demand attention helps most pupils to progress well during lessons. By contrast, a weakness in the use of any assessment that takes place creates the satisfactory impact of teaching. This is because teaching has not, for a while, been guided soon enough by an appreciation of who did well and who could have done better, particularly the more able pupils. Thus new learning drives pupils in the right direction, but not well enough to cause good achievement over time.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum promotes satisfactory achievement. The content and style of approach with regard to English have been overhauled to allow, for example, far more discussion and planning before a writing task. A similar revamp of the programme for mathematics has recently taken place but it is too early to see any marked improvements. This nationally recommended reshaping of the curriculum has been accompanied by useful additions such as the introduction of Spanish and the teaching of the ukulele to all pupils. The curriculum is enhanced by some engaging club and sports opportunities such as tag rugby, scrabble and junk modelling. There is satisfactory provision for information and communication technology (ICT) in the computer room, augmented by use of electronic whiteboards in classrooms. ICT is not used greatly to support many subjects, but the school has this drawback in hand.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The first-rate care and support for pupils, particularly those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, provide a climate in which learning is settled. Child protection procedures and risk assessments are in place and working. Attendance has improved because the school works well with the welfare officer to monitor absence closely and communicate their findings to parents. A key feature of the school's support is the way in which all pupils are included well, including those who find learning difficult or who are learning English as an additional language. The school works well with parents to ensure partnership between home and school as was demonstrated by recent curriculum evenings for parents. Guidance for pupils about how to improve their work is satisfactory. Marking and discussions in lessons about success in relation to pupils' targets are inconsistent aspects across the school. The satisfactory academic guidance prevents care, guidance and support from being outstanding overall.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management have been determined in the face of the recent difficulties in staffing. The barriers to pupils' learning associated with behaviour and mobility have been handled well. Levels of exclusion have been reduced significantly: the school is now a quiet and friendly place in which to learn. The falling numbers of pupils, staff changes and temporary cover all took their toll, but teaching has been rejuvenated since September 2007. Systematic checking has given leadership and management, including governors, a good idea of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, the headteacher's vision and the good plans for improvement give the school direction. The curriculum has been improved, a useful tracking system implemented and provision for play in the Foundation Stage has been enhanced. The effect of leadership and management is satisfactory now but these improvements demonstrate a sound value for money and a good capacity to improve.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 |
| 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? | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Achievement and standards

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| 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 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? | 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? | 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

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| 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 | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 3 |
| 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? | No |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so helpful when I inspected your school. I thoroughly enjoyed talking to many of you in the playground, at lunchtime, in lessons and when some of you showed me your work. I think the spirit of your school was shown wonderfully in the junior celebration assembly when so many children received well-earned rewards in a climate of warmth and good humour - especially when someone played the Noddy theme tune by mistake! What was so impressive was the way in which all kinds of success was applauded: mathematical achievement, special pieces of writing, and superb models made during Pathway courses.

You go to a satisfactory school, and one that is improving well. This is one of the reasons why I liked my visit so much. Year 6 pupils, who spoke to me on several occasions, assured me that lessons are more interesting now and that behaviour is better. You are so lucky to have the Wild Garden. I can't remember seeing such a well equipped outside area for a long time. The CCTV camera in the blue tit bird box and the way in which you grow vegetables and fruit for use in the school kitchens provide such valuable experiences for you.

Your headteacher and governors have worked hard to create a settled school in which you can learn happily. I saw this for myself in classrooms, outside on the nature trails and in the Pathways room. Those parents who wrote to me praised the school for the support it gives you, particularly if you find learning difficult or have come from another school. My findings agree with their positive views.

I know everyone wants to do even better and I have suggested three things that will help. Those of you who can complete harder work and reach higher levels should be given extra challenges. Any assessments of your learning should be used to pinpoint exactly where you and the teaching you receive could improve. Lastly, you all need to be clearer about your targets and how to achieve them.

You can all help by completing extra challenges if they come your way, listening carefully to any advice about how to improve your work and trying hard to reach your targets.