

Lancaster Dallas Road Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119130
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313193
Inspection date	13 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Jennie Platt

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	420
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ben Matthews
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Belbin
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2005
School address	High Street Lancaster Lancashire LA1 1LD
Telephone number	01524 64520
Fax number	01524 842725

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The overall effectiveness of the school and the following issues were investigated: the provision for children in the Foundation Stage, progress of the more able pupils in writing in Key Stage 1 and the clarity of action plans designed to raise standards. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation document, national published data, school improvement plan, parents' questionnaires and discussions with governors, staff, parents and pupils. Several lessons were observed and pupils' work scrutinised. Other aspects of the school were not investigated in detail, but the inspection 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 the report.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average. It serves an area which is socially and economically varied but is broadly similar to the national picture. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. An average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and more than is usually seen in schools are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and /or disabilities is average and the number of these pupils with a statement of special educational need is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. At its core is the leadership of an inspirational headteacher. Her enthusiasm is infectious, as is her commitment to learning being enjoyable as well as successful. In her introduction to the school she makes it clear that visitors will not leave without smiling. This is certainly true as the school echoes with laughter and good humour. Personal development is exemplary and pupils thoroughly enjoy school; this is reflected in their excellent attendance. The school is very popular in the locality and the vast majority of parents are extremely pleased with the education provided. Their feelings are encapsulated in one parent's view of the pupils: 'Well cared for, well taught, achieving well and always happy'.

Teaching is of an exceptionally good quality, enabling pupils to attain high standards. The good start made in the Foundation Stage is built on most effectively, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are above average. Mathematics and reading are stronger than writing, although this is improving as more pupils exceed the level expected for their age. Excellent progress in Key Stage 2 leads to standards being significantly above average at the end of Year 6. The results of national tests have been impressive for several years. Nevertheless, the school is not complacent as can be seen in the drive to increase the number of pupils reaching the highest level expected of this age. This number has risen year on year and current predictions show that this pattern is continuing. The focus on improving standards has led the school consistently to exceed its challenging targets. A few parents expressed concern about standards in Year 5 because learning has been disrupted by unavoidable changes of staff in Key Stage 2. The school records show no fall in standards, with additional help being planned as these pupils move into Year 6.

Overall achievement in the school is excellent for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and those who are learning English as an additional language. The main reason for this is the accuracy of assessment and the determination to match work not only to individual ability but also to the pupils' preferred learning styles. This means lessons are varied with a range of imaginative activities that capture the interest of all and motivate them to learn. Excellent teaching seen in Year 6 was very exciting for pupils. High expectations and a clear focus for learning were key features of the lessons. In history, effective use of information and communication technology to research and then produce a compact disc made pupils eager to be involved. Similarly, a model of a vehicle made earlier led to pupils being full of ideas and keen to start their design and technology activities. The exemplary way in which pupils behave and their extremely positive attitudes to learning are a direct result of teachers' positive management and innovative teaching. Pupils are encouraged to be independent and to play a full role in the school community. For example, they organise projects from instigation to completion, often including marketing and budget management. For example, the production of videos and printing on shirts which are then sold to support charities. The skills learnt combine with the pupils' high academic skills to ensure they are extremely well prepared for the future.

Another factor contributing to the pupils' outstanding achievement is the stimulating curriculum. One strength of the management by the headteacher and subject leaders is their confidence to be flexible and judge objectively whether changes are working to provide the best opportunities for the pupils. If this turns out not to be the case, adjustments are swiftly made to keep the curriculum closely matched to the abilities and interests of all. Recent reorganisation of the curriculum has led to subjects being united under one theme and approaches adapted to include special theme weeks and events linked to those themes. This has made learning very

purposeful for pupils; as one said, 'I enjoy the workshops and learning is more interesting.' The school's location in the heart of Lancaster is fully exploited. Theatre and library visits are regular events as are links with local schools and sports clubs to overcome the school's limited outdoor space. Parents and pupils appreciate the excellent range and quality of extra-curricular activities.

Care for pupils is outstanding both in providing for their pastoral needs and academic guidance. Safeguarding procedures are in place. Every year group has a member of staff with a pastoral role who combines well with the learning mentor to keep a watchful eye on pupils' every need. When an issue arises, guidance is warm and sensitive and has a positive effect on pupils' self-esteem and achievements. This is a school that truly celebrates the diversity of its pupils and pupils say there is no bullying or harassment. The school gives close attention to pupils' health and well-being. This has been rewarded by an array of awards including the national Healthy Schools Award, an Activemark and a Sportsmark. Pupils say they know how to look after themselves and watching them at play shows a real enthusiasm for keeping fit. The amazing display of trophies alerts visitors to the school's success in competitive sport. Rigorous systems closely check pupils' progress and interventions are quickly put into action if a pupil is seen to be falling behind. Teachers are very effective at involving pupils in their learning so that they know what they need to do to improve.

Leaders and managers play an excellent role in making this an outstanding school. Self-evaluation is rigorous and the school knows itself very well. Priorities are turned into actions that lead to improvement. Governors are very influential in the school. They have first hand contact with teachers and pupils and, consequently, are very knowledgeable about what is happening in school. Improvement since the last inspection is excellent because of the relentless drive to raise standards. Hence the results of national tests have risen every year. The school is in an excellent position to improve even further and to continue to offer outstanding value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The children in the Reception classes have a good start to their education because of the caring relationships which enable them to feel happy and get on with all that is available. Teaching is good and the staff have high expectations that children will shine in all areas of learning. From starting school with skills that are typical for their age, children make good progress and by the time they enter Year 1 standards are above the level expected for their age. The curriculum meets the needs of this age group with a careful balance between teacher-led and independent activities. As a result, children find learning exciting. Outdoor provision has improved and a variety of activities are planned for children to extend their learning outside of the classroom. Unfortunately, access to the outdoors is restricted and this means additional staffing is always needed; this makes it difficult to ensure learning outdoors is a natural part of the day.

What the school should do to improve further

- Look for ways to improve access to the outdoor space for children in the Foundation Stage.

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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

14 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lancaster Dallas Road Community Primary School, Lancashire, LA1 1LD

Thank you very much for making me so welcome during the day I spent in your school. I thoroughly enjoyed the inspection and would like to share with you those things that make your school outstanding.

You behave extremely well and work hard. It is clear from your smiling faces that you enjoy school. It is no surprise your attendance is excellent. Teaching is of high quality and your teachers make lessons exciting for you. I was impressed by how well you are all doing in English, mathematics and science. The staff take excellent care of you and I am pleased that you feel safe and know staff are readily available if you have any problems. Your school is exceptionally well managed. Changes are made to ensure that you experience a rich and varied range of activities that match your interests and needs. It was a pleasure to see how well you play together in quite a small space. You are very energetic and know that keeping healthy is important. The children in the Foundation Stage enjoy learning outdoors. I have asked the school to look for ways to make it easier for them to get to their special outdoor space from the classroom.

I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Jennie Platt

Lead inspector