

Bacup Thorn Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119193
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313215
Inspection date	13 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Carole Cressey

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	148
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Fitton
Headteacher	Mrs Alison Edgar
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2005
School address	Cowtoot Lane Bacup Lancashire OL13 8EF
Telephone number	01706 874027
Fax number	01706 874027

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Introduction

The inspection carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- whether strategies to improve standards in English are effective in ensuring that all pupils do well enough
- whether pupils in Key Stage 1 are achieving as well as they can.

Evidence was gathered from the school's own assessment data and other school documentation, observations of teaching and learning, the way that pupils interact with each other and their response to what is provided for them, parents' questionnaires and discussions with governors and staff. 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

The school is situated in an area where there are significant pockets of social and economic deprivation. Most children are White British: a small proportion are from minority ethnic backgrounds and have English as an additional language. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average overall but the distribution of such pupils is not even across the classes. The proportion in some classes is as high as 40%. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school at times other than the normal points of arrival and departure 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. The first inkling that this is so is the moment you walk through the door and receive a warm welcome from staff; see happy, confident pupils; hear calming music; see excellent displays of high standards of work which reflects how exceptionally well pupils achieve; and watch the schools television channel which shows the most recent exciting educational visits to enrich learning. An overwhelming majority of parents speak very highly of the school, value what the school does for their children and say that the excellent teaching enables their children to do very well at their secondary schools.

The headteacher is an outstanding leader and manager with passionate commitment and quiet determination to provide the very best education possible for pupils. This resolve is shared by an excellent team of teaching and support staff and a very effective governing body. Leadership rigorously monitors all aspects of the school's work. This ensures that teaching, care, guidance and support, along with a very creative and rich curriculum are always of the highest quality and procedures for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety meet requirements. As a result, pupils' behaviour and attitudes are exemplary; pupils have a tangible enthusiasm for learning and invariably reach the highest standards they can. They have an exceptionally mature understanding of their responsibility to each other and the local and world community. Attendance is above average and the school does all it can to ensure that pupils attend regularly.

Pupils' achieve outstandingly well from skills on entry to the Foundation Stage that are mostly well below those typically expected for children of their age. Standards are above average by the end of Year 6. By the end of Year 2 standards are average and the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level or above for their age increases in reading, writing and mathematics. Comparisons with national data need to be treated with caution because the size of groups can be small and they vary from year to year because of the school's mobile population. The school's rigorous data shows that whatever children's starting points are, once immersed in the exciting, practical and challenging activities, which are a very strong feature throughout the school, pupils' achievement thrives. Progress accelerates in Key Stage 2. Individuals achieve exceptionally well, usually meeting the challenging targets set for them and often exceeding them. In the 2007 national tests, the school's standards in English were above average. In mathematics and science they were well above average. Currently in Year 6, standards are not as high because the ability of this group is less strong than the previous year. Importantly pupils achieve very well and standards in the current Year 5 are high.

Standards in English were an area for improvement at the previous inspection. Everyone has been galvanised into taking every opportunity to implement effective ways to successfully improve standards in literacy. Throughout school, pupils are encouraged to talk and express themselves well. There is plenty to talk about because the staff provide rich experiences. These can include a well planned visit such as the recent exciting train journey or the well conceived study of interesting books which became the focal points for much learning. Even the youngest of children write poetry about their real train journey. One parent said '... they don't just hear about things in this school, they will read books, dress up and act out the characters and even go to another school to watch the film of the story. I wish I'd gone to this school when I was young I would have learned so much more.' Every classroom displays a wide range of prompts to enable pupils to write successfully. Along with the systematic teaching of sounds and letters standards in writing have almost caught up with those in other subjects.

A major key to pupils' success is the rigorous use of assessments and observations to ensure pupils make fast progress. Excellent extra support is provided for any pupil at risk of falling behind, for those who learn at a fast rate and those new to English. Pupils are provided with all the tools they need to be very successful learners. Teachers are especially skilled in helping pupils to know precisely what they need to do to attain the next level in their learning. Class and individual targets are clear and marking and discussions enable pupils to know exactly what they need to do to achieve them. Learning is exciting and great fun. Whether pupils are in lessons, on visits to extend their understanding, or enjoying the many recreational clubs there are exceptionally well resourced activities which continually challenge them.

Staff manage pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities exceptionally well and as a result this group of pupils make excellent progress toward their targets, often attaining the expected level for their ages. They take a full part in school life. The school does all it can to help pupils stay fit, healthy and emotionally secure so that they are ready to learn. Healthy and imaginative breakfasts from the school's 'ready steady cooks' who have appeared on television ensure pupils start the day with all manner of exciting tastes depending on the season, celebrations or festivals occurring around the world. Additional support is available for those pupils who arrive at the school at different times during the year to enable them to reach the standards they are capable of. Counselling is available when children need help to manage exceptionally difficult situations.

An excellent programme of social and health education provides the pupils with the necessary tools to develop high levels of personal safety, care and healthy living. 'Wake and shake' exercises are an excellent start to the day for most pupils to wake up their minds and bodies and to encourage punctuality. Pupils have an excellent understanding of cultures and faiths and are exceedingly respectful and tolerant. The school council is very proud that it really does make a difference to school life. Councillors have worked with the local community to create a fruit and vegetable garden, improved the school dinner menu and recruited eco warriors. These everyday activities help to prepare pupils admirably for future citizenship.

The school has a very accurate insight into its strengths and weaknesses and is constantly looking for new challenges to enhance the education of its pupils. It is exceptionally well placed to continue to be very successful.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The effectiveness, leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are outstanding. From mostly low levels on entry especially in communication, language and literacy and personal and social development children make very good progress. As a result, by the time children move into Year 1 a significant number achieve the expected goals for their ages although few exceed them. Staff ensure that the excellent indoor and outdoor environments support and extend children's spontaneous play and promotes their personal and social development exceptionally well. Excellent teaching and learning stems from activities which are taught in a very imaginative and enjoyable way: wherever possible children handle real materials. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are quickly identified and receive sensitive support enabling them to take a full a part as possible in the school community.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no significant areas for improvement.

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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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	2
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

16 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bacup Thorn Primary School, Lancashire, OL13 8EF

Thank you so much for being so friendly and welcoming when I inspected your school. I really enjoyed talking to you, especially the school council.

I was so pleased to see how well behaved you are, how much you help each other in lessons and in the playground and how much you enjoy school.

I could see by the work in your books and displays around the school that you are all doing exceptionally well in English, mathematics and science. I was especially pleased to see how much your writing has improved.

One of the reasons why your work is so good is because you all seem to know your targets and because you listen carefully when your teachers tell you what you need to do to improve your work.

You are being so well prepared to be good citizens. I was very pleased to hear how much you know about all the many cultures, religions and traditions there are in our country and around the world. You know how important it is that we all should respect each other's way of life. You also know such a lot about the importance of conserving the world's resources. You are very sensible, caring and tolerant young people.

You go to an outstanding school, where your headteacher and teachers make lessons fun and help you learn such a lot. Yours is a school where all children work hard and are helped by their teachers to achieve their very best. I hope you will continue to enjoy school as much as you do now and that it will help you to become happy and successful adults.

Yours sincerely

Carole Cressey

Lead inspector