

Belthorn Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119289
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313242
Inspection date	6 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	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	140
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tom Small
Headteacher	Mrs Janet Cooper
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2005
School address	Belthorn Road Belthorn Blackburn Lancashire BB1 2NY
Telephone number	01254 55620
Fax number	01254 55620

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Introduction

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

- whether strategies to improve standards in writing are effective enough in ensuring that all pupils do well enough
- whether the assessment systems are sufficiently rigorous to ensure that the progress of all pupils is good enough
- if pupils know precisely how to improve their work and whether they are doing well enough in relation to their targets.

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. The inspector found that the judgements made in the school's self-evaluation form were justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is situated in a rural area and in addition to serving a number of small villages it draws about 60% of its pupils from the urban areas of Blackburn and Darwin. The socio-economic circumstances of families vary greatly and there are pockets of significant deprivation. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Most pupils are White British and a small number of pupils are from Traveller families.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. The headteacher provides very good leadership and has built well on the successes of the previous long serving headteacher. Improvements since the last inspection have been good and standards have risen year-on-year. The school's success can be further seen by its popularity in the local community, the number of pupils who attend the school from outside the immediate catchment area and the warm way the school welcomes families from Traveller communities. An overwhelming majority of parents speak very highly of the school and the following comment is typical of many, 'the standard of education my three children have received has been of the highest quality. They are taught in a caring, positive way and they leave Belthorn able to adapt to life in secondary school with ease'.

The headteacher's commitment, energy and determination to provide the best education possible are shared by an effective governing body. Together they accurately judge the school's strengths and weaknesses and know what needs to be done to ensure sustained improvement. The success of these actions also shows that the school has good potential to make further improvements. However, the headteacher's heavy teaching role and the lack of a senior management team to share responsibilities means that too much of the management of the school has to be done outside of the school day.

Leaders rigorously monitor the quality of 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 a good quality and procedures for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety are firmly in place. As a result, behaviour and attitudes are exemplary, the majority of pupils reach the standards expected of them and pupils are developing a love of learning and an exceptionally mature understanding of their responsibility to each other and the wider local and world community.

The levels that children start school with vary from below the expected levels of development to broadly typical for their ages and abilities. Progress is good in the Reception class and by the time children move into Year 1, the great majority are reaching the learning goals expected for their ages. This good start is built on throughout the school and pupils continue to work hard and achieve well. In the 2007 national assessments and tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, standards overall were significantly above average. However, comparisons with national data need to be treated with some caution because the size of groups can be small and they vary from year to year. Most pupils in the current Year 6 are reaching the expected level in English, mathematics and science and over half are reaching the higher levels in reading, mathematics and science with a quarter reaching them in writing. The school is likely to exceed its challenging target. The outstanding way the school nurtures those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is second to none and as a result they make very good progress toward their targets and are able to take a full part in all the school has to offer. Those pupils from Traveller families who are able to attend school regularly make very good progress and reach the expected level for their ages and abilities.

This is not a school that rests on its laurels. Although standards overall have risen to significantly above average for the last two years, leaders recognised that standards in writing were not as high as in other subjects and identified that some pupils, especially boys, were not achieving as well as they should. Staff have skilfully implemented a wide range of very effective strategies to accelerate progress in writing. For example, every classroom has a 'literacy wall' which

provides a wide range of prompts and ideas to enable pupils to be successful writers. Daily punctuation lessons are improving pupils' basic skills. Topics, special 'writing days', cross-curricular links, after-school clubs and information and communication technology are carefully planned to motivate both boys and girls to want to write. In addition, a very good assessment system has been put in place that staff use well to identify which pupils need additional support to reach the expected levels. As a result, standards in writing are beginning to improve across the school and more pupils are reaching the expected levels for their ages. However, staff do not yet use assessments as well as they could to identify those pupils who need extra challenge to reach the higher levels, particularly in writing.

The school very effectively promotes pupils' love of learning, as well as their understanding of how to stay healthy, keep themselves and others safe and become responsible, caring members of their school and locality. The school sees these skills as being paramount to pupils becoming successful young citizens. This ensures that pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Pupils speak with confidence about the importance of personal safety and show a huge commitment to healthy lifestyles. This is reflected in their understanding of the importance of a regular fire practice and by the fact that their parents remark how proud they are that when they take them out to restaurants for a meal they insist on choosing something healthy from the menu. The school council not only has its own budget, it is responsible for recycling and buying resources for the playground and has also played an important part in helping the governors to appoint a new teacher to the school. Now that represents real understanding of responsibility and citizenship! Along with developing their responsibility to their school, of especial note is pupils' understanding and respect for other cultures, religions and ways of life.

Teaching is consistently good. Much of the pupils' success is due to the fact that they are fully involved in the learning process. Lessons provide planned opportunities for pupils to ask questions, offer comments and explore new ideas in a secure and supportive environment. Pupils have a determination to do well, are clear how to improve their work, know what their targets are and have complete confidence their teachers will help them achieve them. The school is aware that some targets are not always sufficiently challenging for higher attaining pupils to ensure they reach their full potential.

The headteacher, staff and governors are determined to continue to ensure that the school continues to equip pupils well for the challenges of the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage is good. The good quality of the leadership and management ensures that the Reception class is an exciting place to learn and staff ensure the provision supports and extends children's spontaneous play and promotes their personal and social development well. Teaching is consistently good. The basic skills of speaking, listening, reading, writing and numeracy are given a high priority and, as a result, the majority of children are well launched into reading, writing and number by the time they move into Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of assessment systems to identify those pupils who need additional challenge to reach the higher levels in writing
- Improve the balance of time between the headteacher's teaching commitments and management responsibilities.

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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	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	3
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	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?	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

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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

9 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Belthorn Primary School, Lancashire, BB1 2NY

Thank you so much for the very friendly way you welcomed me to your school recently. I really enjoyed talking to you, especially the school council. It was so good to hear how valued and proud you feel because you are making a difference to your school.

I was so pleased to see how very well behaved you are, how much you enjoy school and how regularly most of you attend. You are becoming very responsible caring children. You look after each other and take pride in jobs such as school councillors. You are also generous to charities and look after the environment by recycling waste materials. You must be exceptionally responsible pupils to be asked to help your governors appoint a new teacher to your school. Congratulations on that, you should be very proud of yourselves!

You also show a really good understanding of the importance of knowing about people in Britain who have traditions and religions that are different from yours. You all seem to know the importance of eating sensible food and taking lots of exercise. Do keep that up because it is so important to stay healthy and fit.

I could see by the work in your books and displays around the school that you are all doing so well in reading, writing, mathematics and science. You work hard in lessons and are keen to answer questions. I know that you have all been working especially hard to improve your writing, so well done for that.

You go to a good school and the standards of your work are already high. In order to make your school even better, those of you who learn at a fast rate, especially in writing, need harder work so that you can reach even higher standards.

Your headteacher and teachers make lessons fun and help you learn such a lot. 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