

Larkholme Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119299
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	339401
Inspection dates	7–8 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Anna Dawson

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 of pupils on the school roll	263
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Norman Irish
Headteacher	Mrs Val Pilkington-Smith
Date of previous school inspection	8 June 2007
School address	Windermere Avenue Fleetwood Lancashire FY7 8QB
Telephone number	01253 874024
Fax number	01253 776048
Email address	head@larkholme.lancs.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and some parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at documents relating to safeguarding, the progress and attainment of the pupils, the curriculum, the school development plan and the way in which the school evaluates its own performance. The views of parents were noted through the return of 25 questionnaires, the school's survey of parents' views and discussion with a small group of parents. The views of the pupils and staff were reviewed and evaluated.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the quality of the teaching and pupils' achievement across the school and other outcomes for pupils
- the quality of the school's safeguarding procedures
- the quality of the curriculum
- whether the leadership and management of the school are effective in raising standards and are demonstrating the capacity to improve.

Information about the school

This large primary school is located in an area with some pockets of social and economic disadvantage. There is an above average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and none requires support for learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average but within this there is an above average proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision consists of a Reception class. The headteacher was appointed in April 2009 and the chair of the governing body was appointed two days prior to this inspection. The school has gained the Healthy School Status.

The school provides day care, nursery education and before and after school care. This provision is not managed by the governing body and is subject to a separate inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Inspectors agree with the school's view that it is not effective because there are significant weaknesses in pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and in the way in which it is led and managed. Improvement since the last inspection is inadequate.

From the time they start school, many pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Provision and the achievement of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are inadequate. As they move into Year 1 there is insufficient rigour and structure to the curriculum which results in poor transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage into Year 1 and consequently many pupils do not reach the standards of which they are capable. While standards at the end of Reception, Year 2 and Year 6 are broadly average, higher-attaining pupils and those that are lower-attaining are not achieving as well as they should. Pupils are not attaining the standards of which they are capable in English and mathematics. The exception is those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities who achieve satisfactorily because of the extra provision and support they receive.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They are attentive, polite and keen to learn. Their attendance is satisfactory. Pupils have an appropriate understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall, but pupils' understanding of cultures other than their own is relatively weak. The pastoral support given to pupils is effective and pupils feel well cared for and know who to go to for help when they need it.

Too much teaching is inadequate. There is little that is good. There are weaknesses in teachers' understanding of how to assess pupils' learning and in how to use their assessments to meet the pupils' needs and plan their learning steps. The curriculum is not planned well enough to ensure that pupils have enough opportunity to apply and consolidate their basic skills in other subjects. The headteacher and the assistant headteacher have accurately identified where improvement is needed most. As a result, the school has sought intervention from the local authority. The local authority's audit confirms the headteacher's view of pupils' underachievement and inadequacies in teaching, inspectors agree. Since the beginning of term, the headteacher and staff have worked together to pinpoint where action is needed for improvement and to devise

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systems and procedures to secure improvement. However, it is too soon to see any notable impact on improvement. The school has strengths in its partnerships with parents and carers. Nevertheless, because the school's strengths are outweighed by its weaknesses, it provides inadequate value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards, improve achievement and accelerate pupils' progress throughout the school by improving the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum and by effectively monitoring and evaluating the impact of the school's work.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that learning is good by:
 - matching work more effectively to pupils' needs
 - improving teachers' understanding of and the use of assessment to identify precisely pupils' next steps in learning
 - eradicating inadequate teaching.
- Ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils in developing their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills.
- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the transition into Year 1 by providing a stimulating learning environment and teaching programme so that all children achieve well in their learning and development.
- Ensure that all those who lead and manage the school evaluate and monitor pupils' progress, putting in place effective targets and procedures to enable all pupils to achieve as well as they can.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Achievement is inadequate throughout the school even though pupils attain broadly average standards. Children start in Reception with skills that are broadly in line with those expected of this age. Both high-attaining and low-attaining children make inadequate progress and have not reached the goals of which they are capable by the time they enter Key Stage 1. This pattern generally continues until the end of Key Stage 2. Even though pupils achieve better at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, this is overshadowed by the greater proportion of inadequate progress elsewhere. As a result of continuing underachievement, by the end of Year 6 some groups of pupils have failed to meet targets set and are not on course to achieve targets for next year. The analyses of the national test results demonstrate that pupils' progress in English and mathematics throughout Key Stage 2 has been significantly below average for the last three years. Many pupils, especially the higher- and lower- attaining, fail to reach their potential.

The exception is the pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities who make satisfactory progress because of the good one-to-one or small group support they receive. Although test data point to boys not achieving as well as girls, the inspection evidence shows this is not a significant difference and generally boys and girls participate equally well in lessons. The school is giving extra support to a small group of

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boys who need it and is having some success in raising their achievement.

The positive relationships between staff and pupils are reflected in pupils' good behaviour. Pupils are well managed in and around school and are polite, say they enjoy school and are eager to learn. They feel safe and know what to do if they need help. Most have a satisfactory understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and many take advantage of the nutritious lunches on offer. Attendance at the breakfast club contributes effectively to pupils' punctuality and well-being. Pupils collect for local charities and show responsibility towards others. Older pupils, for instance, help younger ones and take on small administrative tasks around school. Consequently, pupils develop appropriate personal and social skills. Other basic skills such as problem-solving, investigative and enterprise skills are not well developed as there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their skills and extend their learning. Pupils are developing a growing awareness and appreciation of diversity.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. There are strengths in the positive

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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relationships between the pupils and the staff, which have a strong impact on pupils' learning even when lessons are not sufficiently challenging. Teachers have recently adopted a common planning format to show that work is planned for the differing attainments of the pupils. However, tasks set are not matched sufficiently well to the needs of pupils, particularly those who are higher- and lower-attaining. Teachers do not use accurate assessments of pupils' attainment to challenge them so that they make consistently good progress. Marking in books is often little more than a tick or positive comment and does not give the pupils sufficient guidance. Teaching and learning is better matched to pupils' needs at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 because work is more challenging and interesting. However, the proportion of inadequate teaching, which is dull and lacklustre, across the school is perpetuating pupils' underachievement. It is not consistently good enough to accelerate progress or to ensure that pupils reach their full potential by the time they leave.

The curriculum is sufficiently planned to ensure that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are systematically developed. However, the use of assessment to guide planning to meet the needs of all groups is not secure and thus results in inadequate lesson planning. Several initiatives are underway to create a more interesting and relevant curriculum, but these have not yet had time to raise standards significantly. The provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the many higher- and lower-attaining pupils is inadequate. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology in other subjects so many pupils are inadequately prepared for their next stage in learning by the end of Year 6.

Pupils are well looked after and the school is a safe place. Statutory requirements for safeguarding pupils and the vetting of staff are in place. The large majority of parents agree that the school cares for their children well. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good and there are appropriate partnerships with outside agencies for additional support. Effective procedures are in place for children as they transfer from the adjacent Nursery into Reception and similarly when they leave Year 6 and transfer to their next phase of education. This is not the case at the end of Reception. Transfer into Year 1 is poor. There is insufficient continuity and provision for children to attain the Early Learning Goals and begin the National Curriculum.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

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The leaders of the school have a realistic view of its effectiveness. There is acknowledgement that achievement and improvement since the last inspection are inadequate. The recently appointed headteacher, senior leaders and staff are committed to improving the school. They know that from their recent tracking of pupils' progress that many are underachieving because they do not have equal access and opportunity to succeed. The headteacher and the assistant headteacher work well together and have the confidence of the staff, governors and parents and their vision for improvement is shared with them. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. Pupils are involved in a variety of community projects and plan to extend their links with the wider community. There is a good partnership with parents and carers. One parent commented that 'the headteacher is like a breath of fresh air'. Parents appreciate the many courses available to them, such as those in basic skills that put them in a better position to help their children at home. Recent initiatives such as the development of 'The Big Write' to improve pupils' writing and the introduction of a more creative curriculum show promise, but as yet there is insufficient evidence of their impact on raising standards.

Weaknesses in teaching and the use of assessment data are significant factors that prevent pupils achieving what they are capable of. Targets are unrealistic and evaluations of pupils' progress are insecure and not well embedded in the school. The checks on teaching and learning have not been rigorous enough. The headteacher and assistant headteacher correctly identify where improvement is needed and their evaluation agrees with the inspection findings. However, the newly-formed leadership team has not had sufficient time to embed strategies for improvement so they are not able to demonstrate an adequate capacity to improve. Governors meet statutory responsibilities and are supportive and involved in day-to-day activities. They have recently gained a better understanding of the challenges that the school faces. The Chair of the Governing Body, who took up his post at the time of this inspection, recognises the role that governors play in being a critical friend to the school to secure improvement. Nevertheless, governance has been ineffective in driving improvement and tackling weaknesses and is, therefore, inadequate.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children do not get off to a good start. They enter school with skills that are broadly typical for their age, although there are fluctuations from year-to-year. Provision is inadequate. Outdoor resources are limited and the play space is too small. Although this is to be developed in the future, it restricts opportunities for children to choose to work independently outdoors. Indoor provision does not inspire or motivate children to learn or to develop well. Activities on offer lack sufficient focus and direction and are not planned well enough to take account of children's needs and interests to improve their learning. Some resources are old and worn and the accommodation is cluttered and untidy with little work of quality on display. Staff ensure that the children are well cared for, that relationships are good and that the children are happy. Teaching is inadequate. Although the teaching of small groups is satisfactory, the large majority of children do not sustain concentration sufficiently well on tasks they choose for themselves. They do not develop skills, such as investigation, because they are limited by the poor quality of the learning environment and the opportunities this presents. Interventions from staff are too brief to promote effective learning. By the time they enter Year 1, a large majority of pupils have attained the nationally expected learning goals overall for all areas of learning. In 2009 the majority of pupils did not attain the nationally expected learning goals in the key area of communication, language and literacy. Leadership and management are inadequate.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents support the school and comment positively about the quality of care their children receive and that their children enjoy coming school. They

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are made to feel welcome into school if they have any worries or concerns. A few parents had concerns about pupils' behaviour, but the inspectors judge that most pupils behave well and that when incidents occur they are well managed. Parents generally get good information about their children's work although a very small minority would like more.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Larkholme Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 25 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 264 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	15	60	9	36	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	16	64	8	32	1	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	9	36	15	60	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	8	32	14	56	1	4	1	4
The teaching is good at this school	9	36	15	60	1	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	36	14	56	1	4	1	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	52	12	48	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	12	48	11	44	2	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	9	36	13	52	2	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	40	13	52	1	4	1	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	32	14	56	2	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	9	36	14	56	1	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	44	13	52	1	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



9 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Larkholme Primary School, Fleetwood, FY7 8QB

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you for sharing your time with us during the recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed talking to you and listening to what you had to say about your school and what you liked best about it. It is good that you behave well and are keen to learn. Now we want to share with you what we have found.

We believe the school could give you a better standard of education. The school will get some 'special measures' to help it to do this. This means that your headteacher, teachers and the governors will get extra support to improve the school for you. Your school will be revisited by inspectors regularly to check that it is making enough progress. We have asked the school to make sure that:

- you are doing as well as you can in all aspects of your work
- your teachers provide lessons that are designed to help you learn as well as you can
- all teachers help you to make good progress by making accurate assessments, giving you challenging work and by telling you how to improve
- there are targets to ensure you achieve as well as you can
- that you are helped to use the important skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology
- the younger children get a better start to their learning and move into Year 1 more successfully
- all those who lead and manage the school make sure all of you achieve as well as you should.

I wish you well for the challenges that lie ahead and I have confidence that you will all continue to try hard and do your very best.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Anna Dawson

Lead inspector

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