

Blackshaw Lane Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105652
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	324249
Inspection dates	20–21 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Susan Walsh

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	226
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Lisa Watson
Headteacher	Mrs A McCormick
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Blackshaw Lane Heyside Royton Oldham Lancashire

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	20–21 May 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is of average size. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly average. Although the proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, the proportion who have a statement of special educational needs is above average because the school provides for a number of pupils who have complex needs. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average and there are no pupils in the early stages of speaking English. Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Nursery and Reception class. More pupils join and leave the school than is usual during the school year. In recent years there has been some staff absence in Key Stage 1 but currently staffing is stable. BLAST, an out-of-school club based at the school, is managed by another provider and is subject to a separate inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It provides good quality care for pupils and this contributes to their good personal development. In addition it provides very well for pupils with complex needs ensuring that they receive good quality support. Strong moral and social development underpins pupils' good behaviour. They have developed a clear sense of right and wrong. Pupils work hard in lessons, want to do well and clearly enjoy coming to school. Their statement, 'I think we've got a really nice school', demonstrates pupils' pride in the school especially the lovely new building. They are keen to contribute to the school community and the Playground Pals do a particularly good job of helping staff to ensure that all pupils feel safe. Bullying is rare and children say if they have a problem they 'just tell teacher and they will sort it out'. The good attention paid to personal, social and health education ensures that pupils are well informed about how to stay healthy.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve well after starting school with skills that are broadly typical for their age. Pupils make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. By the end of Year 6 they are reaching broadly average standards though fewer pupils than average reach the higher Level 5. Achievement is satisfactory. Taking into account their individual starting points pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and those with very complex needs make particularly good progress in their personal development because they are well supported.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. A great strength in teaching is the warm, supportive working relationships between pupils and staff that boost pupils' confidence. However, pupils' progress is not always as good as it might be because those of average ability and more able pupils are often set the same work. This results in higher ability pupils spending too long on activities that consolidate rather than extend their learning. Although teachers are very good at supporting pupils' personal development they are less effective at moving pupils' learning on through providing effective academic guidance. Marking often consists of positive comments but pupils do not have sufficient information about how to improve their work and there is little reference made to individual learning targets.

Many staff, leaders and managers are very hard working and committed to improvement. Although leadership and management are satisfactory overall the quality of leadership is improving because of an increased focus on standards and achievement. Procedures for checking pupils' progress towards their targets are now in place. The information obtained is increasingly being used to raise expectations that staff have of their pupils. Although leaders are aware of the school's overarching strengths and weaknesses, some of its own judgements about its work are over positive. This is because the checks that leaders make on teaching do not always fully consider pupils' learning in lessons and observations are not backed up by a thorough scrutiny of pupils' work that would supply a fuller picture of the impact of teaching over time. The school's satisfactory capacity for improvement is illustrated in the way that it has recovered from the slowing of achievement and a dip in standards in 2007 and sustained those improvements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children join the school either in the Nursery or Reception class, they have skills that are similar to other children of their age although a significant proportion has skills below those typical for their age. Good leadership and management have secured improvements to provision, which is now good. The curriculum has developed well with a good balance between adult-led activities and those that are chosen by children. A good variety of exciting learning opportunities capture children's interest well. They help to ensure that children make good progress in all areas of learning and really enjoy school. The outdoors is also used successfully to reinforce learning. Staff are accomplished at questioning children and developing their skills. Children are confident, articulate and work and play well together. They often have valuable and spontaneous conversations between themselves. Children are well cared for and welfare requirements are met. Parents are pleased with provision in the Nursery and Reception classes, typically saying, 'Teachers are always willing to help and to talk to me about any concerns I may have.' Children who are experiencing difficulties are identified early and are effectively supported. Although regular checks are made on children's learning, staff are aware that more of these assessments need to be based on children's independent learning. This is to ensure that the information that is collected at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is robust and reliable.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the match of work to pupils' abilities in order to extend the learning of more able pupils and enable more of them to reach the higher National Curriculum levels by the end of Year 6.
- Ensure that pupils are well informed about how to improve their work through teachers' marking and the use of individual learning targets.
- Make certain that leaders' monitoring of teaching is rigorously linked to pupils' learning outcomes and takes account of the work that they complete in lessons.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness 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

Children usually enter Year 1 with skills that are similar to expectations. They make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 2 standards in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly average. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher level 3 is broadly in line with the national average. Progress in Key Stage 2 was too slow in 2006 and 2007 but improved to satisfactory in 2008. Standards at the end of Year 6 dipped in 2007 and were below average but these improved to average in 2008, although too few pupils reached the higher Level 5 especially in English. The school has sustained these improvements and current achievement is satisfactory, although leaders and managers are well aware that more pupils should be working at the higher levels in English, mathematics and science. Those who join the school late usually make similar progress to other pupils as do the small proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. The pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the effective support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Teachers provide good role models and pupils follow their lead, displaying thoughtful and kind attitudes to others who may be finding learning difficult. By Year 6 pupils have developed into sensible, mature individuals who are able to empathise with the feelings of others. This was demonstrated in their sensitive writing about the First World War. Their cultural development is not as strong. Although pupils are aware of their own culture, their knowledge of other cultures is weaker. However, they are keen to stress that 'there is no racism in this school'. Pupils behave well both in and out of lessons and are very willing to work hard. Attendance is satisfactory and there are few pupils who take extensive time off school. Pupils know how to keep fit and healthy. They usually make sensible choices about food and enjoy taking exercise. Confidence and positive attitudes to learning combined with average standards in basic skills ensure that pupils are adequately prepared for their next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers are particularly successful at establishing a calm, working atmosphere where pupils feel extremely safe and secure and are able to become more self-assured. They manage behaviour well and the positive working relationships between staff and pupils often include the good use of humour. Teachers and their assistants offer particularly good personal support to those with complex needs and others who find learning challenging. Teachers' planning sometimes contains little detail and does not always take fully into account the needs of pupils of different abilities. For example, in mathematics pupils of average ability and more able pupils often complete the same work and this limits the progress of the more able pupils because they are not challenged sufficiently. Pupils were heard to comment in several lessons 'It's too easy.' Most lessons are lively and interesting. Occasionally, the pace of learning is slower. In these instances, pupils sit and listen to the teacher for too long and this restricts their opportunities to work independently and practise their skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets requirements but the school is aware that it is focused heavily on enabling pupils to gain knowledge. It is slowly moving towards a greater emphasis on developing skills. Some links are developing between subjects such as history and art and the school has taken small steps towards creating a more inspired curriculum but there is still some way to go. The attention paid to the development of basic skills is satisfactory overall. However, there are some missed opportunities to reinforce skills such as writing. For example, in some classes much of the work in science is based on completing worksheets or copying while in others pupils write good quality accounts of their practical work. The curriculum is very successful at developing pupils' personal skills and the teaching of Spanish in Key Stage 2 is a particular strength. Links with other schools have been used effectively to create extra activities for gifted and talented pupils (for example dance workshops) although these pupils are not always fully challenged through the basic curriculum in school. Enrichment through visits is satisfactory. Good use is made of the locality. For example, pupils talk enthusiastically about their visit to

a centre for outdoor education. There is a good range of clubs including sufficient opportunities for pupils to play sport.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is very good and is a strength of the school. Staff, including senior managers, know the children very well and successfully provide a nurturing environment where pupils feel safe and secure. Current government safeguarding requirements are met. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good because the staff that support them are keen to develop their skills and work hard to develop an understanding of each child's individual needs. Good links with external agencies further enhance the good support for vulnerable pupils. Pupils who are new to the school are made very welcome. Although most parents feel their concerns are quickly addressed some parents feel that they are not listened to. Checks on pupils' progress have improved and as a result pupils who are falling behind are identified earlier. Support is being focused more efficiently and is becoming increasingly effective. Pupils do not receive sufficient guidance about how to improve their work. Marking is very inconsistent in quality and is often only congratulatory. There is limited use of individual learning targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Although leadership and management is satisfactory overall it has recently been strengthened in several areas. For example, the headteacher's recent work with the local authority has made a good contribution to improving provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Better tracking procedures have increased the focus on achievement and standards and pupil progress meetings have focused attention on where pupils are at risk of underachieving. This has included employing booster classes particularly for pupils in Year 6, both to help them catch up and to ensure that their learning is consolidated. The management of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a strength of the school's satisfactory promotion of equal opportunities. Aspects of the school's self-evaluation are overgenerous. This is because of weaknesses in the way the school makes checks on teaching and learning. Lesson observations do not focus sufficiently on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and are on occasions too generous and monitoring has not extended to looking at pupils' work. The school provides satisfactory value for money. Although many teachers use resources well, financial constraints have affected some aspects of provision, for example the range of computer programs available for pupils to use. The school works well with the local community particularly with other local schools. However, the school's promotion of community cohesion is only satisfactory because pupils have limited opportunities to make contact with people from a range of different backgrounds and ethnicities and this restricts their understanding of diversity. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are very supportive but have not always been provided with the information and skills that would help them to ask more challenging questions.

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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?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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?	3

Leadership and management

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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

Thank you for being so friendly and polite when we came to inspect your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you and listened very carefully to what you had to say. I am writing to tell you what we found out. Your school is satisfactory and it is getting better all the time. We were pleased to see that you all behave well and work hard in class. It was lovely to see such well behaved children. You know how to keep fit and healthy. We were very impressed by the work of the Playground Pals who are doing a very good job making sure that everyone gets on well together in the playground. It's good to know that you feel very safe in school and always have someone to talk to if you have any problems.

You are making satisfactory progress but it is improving. The standards you reach are very similar to those reached by pupils in other schools. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Your teachers are good at helping those who find learning very hard. We noticed that you get on well with your teachers and some of them are very good at making you laugh and encourage you to enjoy your learning. We have asked your teachers to make sure that you all have work that's just at the right level, including setting harder work for those of you who find learning easy. We have also asked them to improve their marking and the way learning targets are used in order to make sure that you always know how to improve your work.

The senior management team who run your school do a satisfactory job. They are working very hard and are making your school a better place. We have asked them to improve the way that they make checks on teaching and learning including checking the work in your books.

We finished the inspection by looking at the exhibition of your lovely art work. It was really fabulous and must have made your mums and dads very proud!

I wish you well for the future.