

Griffin Park Primary School

Cavendish Place, Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 2PN

Inspection dates

19–20 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, although improving, is not consistently good enough across the school to help pupils make good progress in all year groups.
- Progress in mathematics is still too variable. Pupils' reasoning skills and their ability to solve problems are the weakest areas.
- Progress in writing is limited in some classes because opportunities for pupils to write at length are restricted, especially in subjects other than English.
- The work given to the most able pupils is not always hard enough to help them make the faster progress and reach the higher standards of which they are capable.
- In some year groups, even when harder work is available to pupils, they spend too long on simple tasks or rely too heavily on adults for approval before moving onto it.
- Although improving, some subject leaders do not focus enough on checking how well pupils acquire skills in their subject.

The school has the following strengths

- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, supported by governors, steered the school successfully through the very significant staffing issues that affected pupils' progress last year.
- The leadership of English and mathematics is now good. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving and pupils in most year groups are making faster progress.
- Pupils' calculation skills are particularly strong by Year 6. As well, pupils now read widely and understand what they read. Pupils expressed their love of reading in the words 'Reading gives you wings.'
- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They likened it to one big family.
- The curriculum is planned well. It includes a wide range of exciting experiences that enhance learning and personal development. Pupils make good progress in science.
- Children make good progress in all areas of learning in the early years. They enjoy many exciting activities, indoors and out, and learn much through them.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils are safe in school. They feel safe and they know how to keep themselves safe in and out of school.
- Pupils enjoy learning and are keen to do well. Pupils in Year 6 shone with pride as they showed inspectors how much they have achieved this year, especially in mathematics.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress to at least consistently good throughout the school, by:
 - building on the strong start children have in the early years to maximise progress in key stage 1 and, subsequently, in key stage 2
 - in mathematics, capitalising on the recent improvements to ensure that teachers develop reasoning and problem-solving skills equally well in all year groups
 - in writing, ensuring that teachers provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to write at length and in different subjects.
- Make sure that all pupils make at least good progress, and that the most able pupils make rapid and sustained progress and excel across a wide range of subjects, by:
 - giving all pupils the confidence to move onto more challenging tasks without having to wait for adult approval
 - ensuring that the most able pupils always have hard enough work to do and that they move onto it quickly instead of taking their time over simpler tasks.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by:
 - continuing to develop the role of subject leaders in helping teachers to assess how well pupils are acquiring skills in different subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has provided strong and effective leadership throughout the difficulties she faced, as she had to find cover for several maternity leaves and support several staff through trauma in their personal lives. Taken together, these factors, although they have all but come to an end, caused a dip in progress in some year groups and led to a drop in the national test results in 2017.
- Supported by the governors, the headteacher took firm and decisive action to manage the many changes that took place. Her tenacity and her effective leadership tempered the impact that the significant turbulence in staffing might otherwise have had on pupils' learning. She has stabilised staffing ready for the new school year.
- Although further improvement is needed, leaders have successfully improved teaching and learning. Through their actions and monitoring, they have increased the capacity for school improvement. They make good use of an external consultant who regularly visits the school to monitor the improvements made.
- Improvement plans for 2018–2019 and beyond show good strategic planning and a concerted drive to keep increasing the rate of pupils' progress. Staff are ambitious for the pupils. They want them to do well and they are receptive to the advice and guidance that will help them increase progress.
- Staff morale is high. Staff praise the headteacher highly for the quality of support they receive and for the attention she and the governors pay to their safety and well-being. That care and attention extend to the pupils and their families.
- Staff performance is managed well. Targets set for teachers link clearly to school improvement plan priorities, which, in turn, arise from accurate self-evaluation. The targets are clear and measurable, and bespoke training helps teachers to reach them. All of this enables leaders to hold staff to account for their pupils' progress.
- The headteacher and the leaders for English and mathematics have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching in different year groups. Their monitoring is accurate. The next steps they expect staff to take are clear, and they follow these up to ensure that staff improve and pupils make better progress.
- Leaders have rebalanced the mathematics curriculum to ensure that reasoning and problem solving are threaded throughout. Their work is beginning to bear fruit. Similarly, the actions leaders have taken to improve reading are working well, especially in relation to comprehension skills and enjoyment of reading.
- Leaders of other subjects check pupils' books and discuss learning with staff to ensure that what they are teaching matches curriculum requirements. Except in science, they do not place enough emphasis on ensuring that pupils are making progress in the skills required in each subject.
- The curriculum is planned well to make learning meaningful for the pupils and to encourage them to be curious and begin to learn for themselves. Many exciting activities involving visits and visitors enhance pupils' learning and personal development. For example, the activities week that was taking place during the inspection presented pupils with high levels of physical and mental challenge. It built

pupils' confidence to try new things, manage risk and overcome fear, for example, on the climbing wall.

- Leaders make good use of pupil premium funding to help disadvantaged pupils learn better and take part in a wide range of experiences in and out of school. The physical education (PE) and sports premium is also used effectively to enhance pupils' physical fitness and to skill staff so that they can teach PE better.
- The funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is used effectively to support these pupils' learning and, where relevant, their behaviour and personal development. Leaders check that the programmes to support these pupils lead to improvement, but there is scope to tighten these systems further.
- A major strength is the work staff do to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and teach them about British values. Leaders ensure that staff prepare pupils well to take their place in society as responsible citizens with a strong sense of fairness, justice and equality.
- Communication with parents is good. Online journals keep parents informed about what their children are learning. A wide range of activities such as Easter and Christmas craft workshops, 'stay and play' days, a Mother's Day tea and a fudge Friday for fathers encourage parents to come into school to see what goes on.

Governance of the school

- Governors know the school well. They have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They visit regularly and make good use of training so that they know they are looking for the right things.
- Keenly aware of the issues she was facing, governors supported the headteacher well in making decisions about staffing to improve teaching and learning. They too are ambitious for the pupils and they support the headteacher well in managing staff performance.
- Finances are managed well. Governors regularly check that the spending they agree to and the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are helping pupils to make faster progress.
- Governors talk knowledgeably about how the PE and sports premium is used both to raise pupils' skills and widen their experiences and to give staff the skills they need to make sure that improvements are sustainable.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The culture of safeguarding is strong. It is reinforced in the staff handbook, and leaders are vigilant in ensuring that staff are secure in safeguarding procedures. They rightly regard this as vital, especially given the turnover and turbulence in staffing.
- Good record-keeping and checklists ensure that all training and checks are up to date, including those for child protection. Procedures are followed well and all staff and volunteers are checked as to their suitability to work with children. Leaders work

effectively with outside agencies when required.

- Leaders make sure that pupils and parents receive a good range of information about safeguarding, including links to websites that provide further advice and guidance. They support pupils and, where relevant, their families well, often signposting families to where they could receive additional help.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has not been consistently good since the last inspection. Consequently, pupils have not made good progress over time. Despite being managed well, significant turbulence in staffing in the past two years has led to too many pupils making less than good progress. This situation is changing rapidly.
- Some staff are not secure about how to teach reasoning and problem solving in mathematics. They sometimes give pupils too much information rather than asking them to reason and explain their thinking. This does not help pupils, especially the most able, to deepen their understanding and think mathematically. Where such skills are taught well, for example in Year 6, there has been a huge improvement in pupils' progress.
- Calculation skills are now being taught well in most year groups. By Year 6, pupils have very rapid mental recall of number facts. Here, there is a constant focus on requiring pupils to think for themselves and select the most efficient method of calculation to solve a problem. Pupils reported that this is making mathematics more fun for them.
- The teaching of reading, including phonics, is now good. Consequently, pupils are making good progress. Staff check that pupils understand new vocabulary and help them to use the text to find facts or think about the meaning an author is trying to convey through the words and phrases s/he uses.
- Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to write in English lessons and in other subjects. However, some limit the progress pupils can make by giving them worksheets that require only one word or short-sentence answers. This prevents pupils, especially the most able, from demonstrating their learning or developing a fascination for a subject.
- Staff, including support staff, deal sensitively with the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They successfully encourage these pupils to gain confidence in themselves and in their learning and to participate fully in lessons and in the wider curriculum. Teachers usually brief the support staff well.
- Throughout the school, relationships are strong. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. Most teachers are becoming increasingly skilled at turning their classrooms into effective learning hubs that encourage pupils to find things out for themselves. They provide effective oral and verbal feedback to pupils on their learning, which, pupils reported, helps them to learn from mistakes.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are well cared for and happy in this school. They talked about the school being a place where 'everyone looks out for everyone else'. Staff are sensitive towards pupils who need additional help and support for any reason.
- There was a resounding 'Yeah!' when pupils were asked if they enjoy school. They feel very safe in school. The site is secure, and pupils are taught to stay safe in and out of school through a range of age-appropriate activities. Parents also said that their children are safe at school.
- Staff ensure that pupils know how to stay safe when using the internet and that they learn about road and water safety. Year 2 pupils talked excitedly about their next swimming session when they were to jump into the water with their clothes on and learn how to save themselves if they fell into water.
- Pupils have every confidence in the staff to help them should they have any concerns. They said that, although rare, bullying does happen and, when reported, it is dealt with quickly and effectively. The school's records confirm this. A small number of pupils are not secure about what bullying is, or the importance of reporting it.
- Staff develop in the pupils a strong sense of equality and inclusion. Pupils explained that those new to the school are helped to settle in and supported in their learning. They said that children who are different would be 'fine, because you can be yourself here'.
- Pupils take responsibility seriously. Their description of the process for electing school councillors shows that they are developing an understanding of democracy. Pupils in the 'Safety Squad' are very aware of the importance of their role in helping other pupils to settle disagreements, find friends and generally be happy at school.
- Occasionally, in lessons, a small number of pupils waste valuable learning time. The most able pupils sometimes spend too long on simple tasks, or pupils await adult approval, lacking the confidence to move onto the harder work that is ready for them.
- By the time they are in Year 6, pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. They are confident and articulate, and very proud of their achievements. Keen to share their learning with inspectors, Year 6 pupils shone as they explained how much progress they had made this year in different subjects.
- Clearly fascinated by all their learning, Year 6 pupils explained how 'becoming' David Attenborough deepened their understanding of the natural world and the need to care for it. They talked about learning new techniques in art, doing research in history and learning about different places and geographical features in geography. These pupils are leaving the school well prepared for secondary education and beyond.
- Pupils enjoy the many activities that help them to grow up and be safe and healthy. They also value the good range of extra-curricular activities available to them in sports and the arts.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils recognise that unkindness and silly behaviour can be upsetting. Incidents of poor behaviour are infrequent, but they are recorded accurately. Leaders use these records to inform actions that lead to better behaviour.
- During social times, pupils play well together. At these times, pupils can be active or, if they wish, sit quietly and read. They spoke of the headteacher being a reading champion, who sits and reads with them, showing them how to enjoy reading.
- Pupils attend school regularly and are generally punctual. Leaders have firm systems and procedures to work with families in which attendance is less than expected. In the past two years, the consistent implementation of these systems has halved the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent.
- The well-attended breakfast club gives those who join it a positive start to their day.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress has not been good enough over time. In 2017, it fell below the national expectation for pupils in Year 6. However, although not consistently good across the school, it is improving rapidly in some year groups.
- Variations in progress are evident in key stage 1 as well as in key stage 2. The pupils' rates of progress reflect the variations in the quality of teaching caused by the staffing issues and high staff turnover referred to earlier in this report. This also means that staff have not all capitalised on what pupils have learned in previous years.
- Pupils currently in Year 6 have made very rapid progress this year in reading, writing and mathematics as well as in a range of other subjects. Good progress is also evident in Year 5. Evidence from the work of pupils in younger year groups shows that, while there are still variations, pupils' progress is beginning to improve here too.
- Pupils' number skills are improving rapidly. The whole-school focus on ensuring that pupils learn their multiplication tables has led to pupils in Year 6 having rapid recall of mental arithmetic facts. These pupils very quickly reduced fractions to their simplest form, explaining how they were using their knowledge of tables and percentages to do so.
- Older pupils explained how the 'reasoner of the week' award spurs them on to explain their reasoning in mathematics lessons. Year 6 pupils proudly explained how and why they selected different methods of calculation to solve different problems.
- Pupils' ability to reason and explain their thinking is not equally well developed in all year groups. This stops pupils, especially the most able, from reaching greater depth in mathematical learning.
- When pupils have the freedom to write at length, they do so well. They think carefully about what language to use to engage the reader. As Year 5 pupils explored how to make their writing more interesting, 'He is happy' became 'He is the sun rising on a blissful Sunday morning'. Pupils recognised the use of metaphor and explained how it deepens meaning and conjures up a picture in the reader's mind.
- When pupils write in different subjects, they use their literacy skills competently. They

do not simultaneously demonstrate how well they are acquiring subject-specific skills or developing a love of the subject. Teachers do not sufficiently encourage them to do so. They do not give pupils enough opportunity to write at length in different subjects.

- Pupils are making rapid progress in reading. Staff, including the headteacher, instil in the pupils a love of reading. Most of the pupils whom inspectors heard read did so fluently, with expression and with good ability to explain new vocabulary. They used a range of skills competently to decipher new words, including phonics and reading round the text.
- Pupils are proud of their improved reading skills. Older pupils talked enthusiastically about being encouraged to read more adult books, readily explaining that their teacher checks the suitability of the books first.
- Among younger pupils, texts are sometimes too challenging for less-able pupils and not challenging enough for the most able pupils. Although the pupils could decode difficult words using their phonics skills, where the texts were too challenging, there was a lack of fluency and understanding.
- Pupils make good progress in science. They benefit greatly from the work they do at the high school as they learn to work as young scientists. Staff build well on this work when the pupils are back at Griffin Park. Good progress is also evident in art.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive good support in class from well-briefed teaching assistants. Their progress and that of disadvantaged pupils also varies from year to year. It is much stronger in Years 5 and 6, where some good progress was evident in reading, writing and mathematics. For both groups, the systems for checking progress are not as tight as they might be to maximise learning. Leaders are in the process of improving them.
- The progress of the most able pupils is hindered because the work set for them is not always challenging enough. In addition, these pupils often remain on simple tasks for too long instead of moving onto the more difficult ones that are there for them to do.
- In some of the younger classes, learning falters when pupils move to their tables to work. They are over-reliant on adults and take too long to settle and get on with their tasks. The opposite is true in Year 6. Here, pupils quickly determine what is too easy for them. They are taught to recognise this and to move onto harder work as soon as possible. They thoroughly enjoy being challenged to do better and better.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership and management are good. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development in this age group. They support staff in taking the right action to improve children's early reading, writing and number skills as well as their personal, social and emotional skills.
- Children start school with skills that are below those typical for their age. The school population changes at the end of Nursery as some go to a different school for their Reception Year, and the school admits others from different early years settings.
- Effective links with parents and good transition arrangements with other settings ensure that staff have accurate information about the children when they start school. Staff use this information, and their accurate assessments of children's learning at

different times in the year, to tailor learning to children's varying needs so that they progress quickly.

- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development was below that found nationally in 2017. Children currently in Reception are making good progress. Data and the children's work show that a greater proportion are on track to reach a good level of development than in the past.
- Children are prepared well for their work in Year 1. However, difficulties in staffing in Year 1 last year mean that staff did not capitalise well enough on the good outcomes from early years.
- 'Our Learning Journey' booklets chronicle well the good progress the children have made since September. They also show the wide range of learning activities they have experienced in the well-planned curriculum.
- Classrooms are well organised, indoors and out. Everything is labelled and books and reading have a high profile. All of this encourages independence and allows the children to access some learning on their own.
- Staff develop children's knowledge of number, mathematical language and early number facts well. Nursery staff teach children to count items, one at a time, encouraging the most able to add and take away, talk about how many, more or less, and to recognise numerals.
- Fluency in number is developed further in Reception, where children learn to count in twos to 20 and tens to 100 and beyond. Staff use songs and rhymes to help the children. They check that the children understand what they learn, so that no child gets left behind.
- Children move from scribbling to forming letters accurately and beginning to write in sentences legibly in their Reception Year. There are specific writing areas in the classroom to encourage early writing skills, but some opportunities are missed, for example, within the home corner and the role-play areas.
- Children's health, safety and welfare are a high priority, which ensures that the children are safe and well cared for. A developing understanding of British values can be seen in the children's work. Much is done to encourage children to manage their feelings, care for each other and develop resilience. Behaviour is good and relationships are strong throughout the early years.
- Well-structured role play encourages the children to be imaginative as, for example, they go on holiday and, from the home corner, take a basket of food and plates with them. Children cooperate well with each other.
- Staff are adept at asking questions to support learning and to develop speech and language. They remind children of what they have learned previously and help them to apply it in new learning, thus contributing to their good progress.
- Leaders make good use of the funding for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities in this age group. This gets both groups off to a good start by the end of Reception.

School details

Unique reference number	119116
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10045164

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Trevor Anderton
Headteacher	Catherine Clayton-Young
Telephone number	01254 57724
Website	www.griffinparkprimary.co.uk/
Email address	office@griffinpark.blackburn.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	June 2014

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- There have been some very significant staffing issues, including a high turnover of staff, in the past two years.
- The school did not meet current government floor standards in 2017. These are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons in all year groups. The headteacher accompanied an inspector in one observation.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read in key stages 1 and 2 and held discussions with pupils from throughout the school.
- Inspectors met with two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors held discussions with a range of school leaders, including those responsible for English and mathematics, for the early years and for the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Several meetings took place with the headteacher about pupils' learning and progress, and about how they and the quality of teaching are assessed, monitored and improved.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents, including: records of pupils' attendance and behaviour; the school's checks on teaching and its review of its own performance; the school improvement plan; information about pupils' progress; and safeguarding documentation.
- There were too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents for an analysis, but an inspector met with parents at the start of the school day and took account of the written responses that were on Ofsted's website.
- Inspectors also took account of the 19 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

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