

Marsden Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119176
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313208
Inspection dates	22–23 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Tony Anderson

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	393
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Dorothy MacInnes
Headteacher	Mrs Janet Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2003
School address	Percy Street Nelson Lancashire BB9 0BE
Telephone number	01282 612769
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Age group	5-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Marsden Community Primary is a larger than average school serving an area of significant social and economic disadvantage. The vast majority of pupils are of British Asian heritage with Pakistani origin and have English as a second language. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has attained the Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Marsden Community Primary is a good school with many outstanding features. It provides good value for money. Children enter the Foundation Stage in the Reception class with skills that are significantly lower than those typical for their age. Standards reached by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science are broadly average; performance in English is better than in the other subjects. Pupils' achievement is good overall; in recent years, a high proportion of pupils have made outstanding progress in English by the end of Year 6, due to the school's excellent focus on language development to support learning across the curriculum.

An exceptionally friendly and caring family ethos has a very clear and positive impact on pupils' attitudes, and contributes very well to their personal development and well-being, which are outstanding. Pupils demonstrate growing confidence and self-esteem, as exemplified by the effective work of the children's council, and in the way they conduct themselves in classrooms and around the school. The quality of teaching and learning, whilst good overall, does vary to some extent. In the best lessons seen, pace and challenge are consistently in evidence and pupils are often encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. However, in some lessons, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to engage in challenging activities and there is occasional overuse of work sheets and directed activities. The good curriculum provides a very positive input into pupils' learning and is significantly enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and enrichment activities. Additionally, the extensive links with the community through a wide range of visits and visitors, and through the outstanding extended services provision, add further significant enrichment to the curriculum. The school very successfully meets the pastoral needs of many vulnerable pupils who are exceptionally well supported by the teaching and support staff. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress due to a close match of provision to their individual needs. The academic guidance given to pupils in the classroom and through the marking of books is not yet used consistently enough to ensure that all pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve or have sufficient responsibility for their own learning.

Leadership and management are good and the school is very well aware of its relative strengths and areas for development. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding and she is very well supported by a dedicated and exceptionally capable team of senior and middle managers. Together with the teaching and support staff, they have moved the school forward at an exhilarating pace since the previous inspection as demonstrated by a very wide range of effective initiatives and improvements. Parents are very supportive of the school. Self-evaluation and the monitoring of pupils' progress are of a consistently good quality, and the information collected is utilised very well to support individual pupils' needs and to target their progress. The monitoring of teaching and learning in the classroom and the sharing of best practice are good. Governors take a very keen interest in pupils' welfare and personal development in addition to providing regular challenge to the leadership team. The school's capacity to improve further is good due to the dedication and enthusiasm of the leadership team, very well supported by all staff and the active and dedicated governing body.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage is outstanding. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection when it was judged to be satisfactory. The school rightly believes the Foundation

Stage is a strength of the school and that it provides an excellent start to children's education. While many children enter the Reception classes at a very early stage of learning English, they quickly grow in confidence and progress rapidly in many areas of learning. Very good induction arrangements ensure that each child's individual ability is quickly and carefully assessed, enabling staff to meet their different needs effectively. As a result, children settle in very quickly, are well versed in class routines and make excellent progress. Teaching and learning are of a very high standard. Planning for provision through the Early Learning Goals is extensive with staff, including support staff, providing an excellent range of exciting and motivating learning opportunities. These stimulating activities fire the imagination and children make very good progress in their personal and language development. The Foundation Stage leader is an excellent role model for the staff and children in her care. All children and staff respond positively to her enthusiasm and determination. Children's performance is closely monitored. Teachers know each child's strengths and weaknesses which helps them to plan learning at the right level.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in mathematics and science.
- Ensure that all pupils are more involved in their own learning and know what to do to improve their work through marking of books and advice in lessons

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good and the standards they attain are broadly in line with the national average. Children enter the Reception class with exceptionally low starting points, and make outstanding progress due to the very effective provision. By the time they enter Year 1, most pupils are below the expected levels for their age but they make good progress through Key Stage 1. In recent years, the standards reached in reading and writing by the end of Year 2 have been broadly average. Standards in mathematics were just below average in both years. Standards dipped a little in 2007 but inspection evidence shows that they are on target to improve in 2008. Pupils' achievement in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory. By the end of Year 6, standards in mathematics and science are broadly in line with the national average but lower than those in English. Standards have been rising in English and, by the end of Year 6, the progress now made by a majority of pupils is outstanding. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and make similar progress to other pupils in response to the additional help they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils flourish in the secure, supportive environment and enjoy all that the school has to offer. This is reflected in their attendance which has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now above the national average. Pupils show sensitivity towards the feelings of others and there is very good racial harmony.

Exceptional cultural development stems from the school's ethos and involvement in the 'Extended School' initiative. Through this, all pupils have a strong awareness of their own and other cultures, respecting the differences in a very positive manner. For example, one child said, 'We are taught how to treat other religions and cultures with great respect.' Pupils feel

safe, show great enjoyment and respond positively to the extensive opportunities offered to them. The highly effective children's council represents their interests very well. Pupils raise much needed funds for charities, including support for a school in Uganda.

Older pupils take on their responsibilities with enthusiasm; for example, they readily take on the roles of prefects and buddies to support younger pupils. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and know the importance of regular exercise and a good diet. They take part in an extensive range of information, communication and technology (ICT) activities such as video conferencing with pupils in New York. Consequently, their technological skills are developing well. This and the many other opportunities presented to them help to prepare pupils well for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good progress made by pupils is very closely linked to the quality of teaching, which is good overall, supplemented by a very effective learning ethos which permeates the school. Teachers monitor pupils' progress well and make good use of this information when planning future work. This helps them to ensure that lessons are pitched at the right level and that all pupils can succeed. Tasks engage pupils' interests and motivate them to learn. Teachers transmit their enthusiasm for learning to pupils through good knowledge of their subjects. Relationships are strong and pupils work productively as a result. The well trained support staff and bi-lingual assistants make a strong contribution to this high quality of learning, whether working with individuals or small groups.

Staff form excellent relationships with pupils which enable them to achieve well. In the best lessons seen the pace was brisk, expectations were high and pupils knew what they were expected to learn. In a few lessons, however, valuable learning time was lost due to insufficient planning and there was an overuse of worksheets. In such lessons, pupils were not sufficiently involved in their learning. Although teachers track pupils' individual progress well, there is a lack of consistency in marking and guidance to pupils on how they can improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A rich curriculum with many outstanding opportunities for enhancement and enrichment meets pupils' needs very effectively. Particularly good support for those pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities helps them to be confident in their learning and so achieve well. The curriculum is planned in great detail and offers pupils many opportunities to participate in exciting and innovative projects, including local, national and international initiatives with other schools. Very good attention is paid to developing basic skills in English and ICT but, until recently, there has been insufficient focus on mathematics and science. Teachers are currently refining their planning to strengthen aspects of the curriculum, develop a more creative approach, and establish more meaningful links between subjects.

Every encouragement is given to parents to be involved in all aspects of the curriculum with many opportunities for adult participation and learning being provided through the excellent 'Extended School Provision'. For example, the 'Fathers and Kids Together' project has had a significant impact on involving fathers in their children's education. Community and cultural

links are taken seriously and contribute very positively to pupils' curriculum development. The curriculum is additionally enriched through a number of educational visits and visitors, and these further enliven pupils' learning and enjoyment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good with some outstanding features. Parents appreciate the support and care provided and they clearly trust the school to look after their children. Members of staff are caring and kind and they know their pupils well. The learning mentor and the behaviour support and inclusion team provide very high quality support for several pupils who find school life difficult. Child protection procedures are rigorous and the procedures for safeguarding pupils, which meet the latest national guidelines, are firmly in place. A very well attended breakfast club gives a good start to the day for many pupils and this effective provision has also helped the school to improve attendance and punctuality. Careful monitoring of pupils for whom English is an additional language helps them to settle quickly into school and ensures that they improve their learning skills in a range of subjects. The school has excellent links with the local community and provides many learning and leisure opportunities, such as a course for parents for whom English is a second language. In some classes, pupils' self and peer evaluations are helping them to understand their work more fully, and in teachers' marking there are good examples of pupils' work being celebrated and the next steps in learning clearly indicated. However, there is an inconsistency in the quality of guidance and in ensuring that pupils are fully aware of the next steps they need to take to make progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good with outstanding features. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and is very well supported by other members of the senior leadership team and governing body. They are very clear about their priorities and have a shared vision for continuing improvement. The vast majority of parents are very complimentary about the way the senior leadership team has helped and directed the school to move rapidly forward since the last inspection. Realistic and challenging academic targets for national test outcomes are set after intensive analysis of past results and ongoing pupil tracking and assessment data. Regular and effective self-evaluation is demonstrated through the school's records, documentation and actions, and a very successful shared management environment has been created. Middle managers relish the many opportunities presented to them to develop their skills both as individuals and as part of the whole management team. Other staff, including teaching and the wide range of bi-lingual and extended service staff, work together in harmony with the leadership team to create a hugely warm and successful environment for learning. Although there are good systems for monitoring teaching and learning, these are just beginning to show impact in establishing greater consistency in classroom practice across the school.

Governors fulfil their statutory obligations well and demonstrate an extremely positive level of commitment to the school's work through their support and challenge to the senior leadership team and all other staff. In their capacity as critical partners, they are successful in holding the school to account for the progress of its pupils. The leadership team, the governing body and all other staff demonstrate a high capacity to improve further.

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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?	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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

24 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Marsden Community Primary School, Nelson, Lancashire, BB9 0BE

Thank you very much for welcoming us to your lovely school. We really enjoyed our recent visit and we were all very impressed with the rapid progress you are making in your lessons and in the way you enjoy your life at school.

We think that your headteacher, your teachers and all other staff do a good job in providing you with a good education. They are helping many of you to learn English very quickly so that you can then make good progress in other subjects such as mathematics and science. Your teachers are good and the work you do is obviously exciting, including the activities outside the classroom. The school takes very good care of you, so it is no surprise that you develop extremely well as individuals with, for example, excellent behaviour and attitudes to work.

We think that you and your school are already doing well but there are just two areas where it could be doing a little better. We have asked the school to:

- improve your standards in mathematics and science
- help you to understand more what you need to do to improve through marking of your books and advice in lessons.

Thank you again for being so friendly to us during our recent visit and good luck to you all in your future learning and enjoyment.

Yours sincerely

Tony Anderson

Lead inspector