

Longshaw Community Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119119
Local Authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	326948
Inspection dates	2–3 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Shirley Herring

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	228
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Kay Harris
Headteacher	Mrs Pam Barnes
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2005
School address	Park Lee Road Blackburn Lancashire BB2 3NX
Telephone number	01254 296450
Fax number	01254 296451

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized junior school serves an area of considerable social deprivation. The vast majority of pupils are from a White British background and a small proportion of pupils are of Indian or Pakistani heritage. The number of pupils speaking English as an additional language is below average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school and parents are overwhelmingly happy with all the school provides. They say how much their children enjoy coming to school and taking part in the extensive range of additional activities on offer. Pupils say they feel safe in the caring environment and they learn how to handle implements safely, for example in science lessons. Pupils know what to do to keep themselves healthy as they choose healthy options at break-time and lunch and take the many opportunities for vigorous exercise. They take their responsibilities in school and beyond seriously, raising money for charities and helping to organise a sports activity afternoon in the infant school. Good behaviour and a positive attitude to work prepare pupils well for the future.

Standards are generally below average as pupils enter the school. They make good progress and standards are now broadly average by the time they leave, though there is a weakness in their writing skills. The results of the 2007 national tests showed a dip in standards to below average. This was due in part to the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in this group, together with the impact of high pupil mobility following the closure of a local school. Nevertheless, the majority of pupils made satisfactory progress in reading, mathematics and science, though some made less than expected progress in writing. The school put several strategies in place to bring about improvements and the provisional results for 2008 show a good improvement in reading, mathematics and science in which pupils achieved well. However, strategies to improve writing are taking longer to have an impact because they are not consistently applied in some classes. The assessments for the current Year 6 show encouraging signs of continuing improvement.

Teaching is good overall and so standards are improving. This varies across the school, particularly in writing. Learning is accelerated where pupils are totally involved and interested. This was seen in an English lesson, where pupils were delighted to talk about and describe 'stretchy' and 'bouncy' sounds. Learning is less successful where teachers do not use varied strategies for engaging pupils' interest and involvement or developing their ideas through purposeful questions and discussion.

The curriculum is good and is enhanced by a wide range of visits to promote enjoyment and understanding. One parent reported that the Roman gladiator her daughter met was so convincing she thought he was real.

The school is led and managed well. A strong aspect of the school is the mutual respect between all staff and the pupils, which emanates from the headteacher. This contributes to pupils' good personal development, a warm learning environment and a good level of care and support. The school analyses and evaluates its work well to identify and address areas for development and this is leading to an improvement in standards. The school has a wealth of information about the progress of individual pupils, though it is not collected together to give an overview on how the school is progressing against national expectations.

There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The school works well with a wide range of professionals to give specialist help where needed. Strengths in teaching and leadership skills now within the senior leadership team indicate a good capacity to improve. The school gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop a more consistent approach to teaching across the school in order to improve pupils' writing skills.
- Collate the available data to provide a clearer overview of standards and progress across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' attainment as they enter the school varies from year to year, but is generally below average. They make good progress in most aspects of their learning during their time in school and their achievement is good. Results in 2007 dipped to slightly below average because of the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Nevertheless, the vast majority of pupils made satisfactory progress in reading, mathematics and science, though a minority did not make the expected progress in writing. Provisional results for 2008 show that there has been a significant increase in the percentage of pupils reaching the expected level for their age and in the proportion who have reached the higher level, especially in mathematics and science. An emphasis on mental agility contributed to an improvement in mathematics, while the practical approach to lessons enabled almost all pupils to achieve the expected level in science. Results in writing were disappointing despite the many initiatives in place. The school's assessments for the pupils now in Year 6 show encouraging signs of improvement and indicate that pupils are on line to meet their challenging targets in English and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Most pupils have a positive approach to learning which is reflected in their regular attendance. They say they enjoy learning and this is echoed by their parents. Pupils know the importance of keeping themselves fit and safe. Break-times and lunchtime see pupils choosing lots of fruit and wholesome foods. Pupils behave well and they appreciate that rules are important for a happy community. They are especially kind to those pupils who from time to time have problems managing their behaviour, and understand they need extra help from their teachers. The weekly 'drop in' where pupils can talk to someone they trust in private about things that worry them is particularly valued. Pupils make a real contribution to the life of their community. Eco warriors remind everyone of the importance of switching off lights, turning off taps and recycling waste paper. Pupils show considerable respect for each other's religions and cultures and are interested to hear how they all celebrate their important events.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and occasionally outstanding. All teachers have good relationships with their pupils and behaviour is usually good. Pupils say their teachers want them to get the best results they can. In the best lessons that is exactly what happens. Teachers make the purpose of learning clear so pupils know exactly what is expected of them. The most

successful lessons have a fast pace, require pupils' active involvement and include a good amount of collaborative work. In one highly successful Year 6 lesson, pupils were absorbed in improving a story about a 'haunted school'. Through exceptionally challenging questions, that always demanded pupils gave more information, and opportunities to explore ideas together, pupils produced high quality stories that had the 'hairs on everyone's neck standing on end!' In some lessons for younger pupils, progress was much less rapid, especially in literacy. Pupils spent too much time listening to the teacher and insufficient time working independently trying out new learning. Marking is often helpful in telling pupils how well they have done and providing advice for further improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A good programme of social and health education provides the pupils with the necessary tools to develop personal safety, care and healthy living and to prepare them well for the future. The school has a range of special programmes to help pupils who are not meeting the expected targets and those who have learning difficulties, and this is an important factor in maintaining good progress. The school is striving to implement effective strategies to improve standards of writing so they are as good as those in numeracy and reading. Although pupils in Year 3 quickly settle into school, the curriculum is not always suitable for their ages and abilities and the way younger pupils learn. As a result, their progress is sometimes slower than it should be. Out-of-school clubs, visits and visitors to school enrich pupils' learning and personal skills. In addition, specialist physical education teaching and good links with the local football club offer pupils many opportunities to participate in a wide variety of sporting activities. Pupils also enjoy learning to play a wide range of musical instruments.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Recommended procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place and rigorously applied. The well organised breakfast club encourages good attendance and provides a calm start to the school day. Staff work very closely with outside agencies to give strong support to vulnerable pupils and they are well informed about the precise needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to ensure that these pupils make good progress. School routines are well established and pupils say there is always an adult on hand if they have any worries. Many parents commented on particular ways that the school had helped their children through difficult times. The school's assessment data effectively tracks the progress of individual pupils and is used well to spot when pupils need extra support. The information is also used to set targets in literacy and pupils are becoming increasingly clear on how well they are progressing and what they should do to improve their work. Plans are being developed to provide similar targets in mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Parents speak highly of the commitment of the headteacher in providing high quality care for their children. Staff appreciate the fact that their opinions are listened to and valued so that there is a strong sense of a team working together for the benefit of pupils. The senior leadership team provide good support for the headteacher

and some display advanced teaching skills and are exemplars of good practice in school. The school analyses its work carefully to identify areas for development and bring about improvements. Identified shortcomings in mental mathematics have been addressed resulting in improved standards. The introduction of a breakfast club has helped to improve punctuality and attendance. However, extensive efforts to improve the comparative weakness in writing have been slower to take effect, though the standard of writing seen in the inspection is encouraging. The school keeps extensive information to track progress of individual pupils and groups, though this is not collated effectively to provide a clear overview of standards and progress in school compared with the national trend. The school promotes a positive attitude to cultural diversity and is involved in many community events. Governance is good.

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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?	2
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/or disabilities make progress	2

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	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

6 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Longshaw Community Junior School, Blackburn with Darwen, BB2 3NX

Thank you for making Mrs Cressey and me so welcome when we inspected your school recently. We were so grateful to you for answering our questions so well and for helping us to find our way around the school.

We agree with you and your parents that Longshaw Junior School is a good school. It seemed to us to be a happy friendly place and all the adults take good care of you. You play your part by coming to school regularly, working hard and behaving well.

You are taught well and there is a good range of extra activities for you to enjoy. You make good progress during your time in the school and most of you are working at the level that could be expected for your age in reading, mathematics and science.

Part of my job when I inspect a school is to try to suggest ways in which even a good school could improve. I have asked your school to continue to find ways to help you to improve your writing. I have also asked the staff to use the information about the progress you make as individuals to create a clear picture of how well the school as a whole is doing.

Good luck to you all!

Yours sincerely

Shirley Herring

Lead inspector