

Higham St John's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119387
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	358546
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Brian Dower

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	133
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Gary Fox
Headteacher	Mr Gareth Hollinghurst (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2007
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector. He visited five lessons and observed the work of five teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, staff and the Chair of the Governing Body. There was a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including pupils' books, monitoring and assessment records, school improvement planning, and curriculum and lesson plans. Seventy-six completed questionnaire returns from parents and carers were analysed, together with a sample from pupils and staff.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at the following.

- The progress pupils are making in mathematics.
- Pupils' ability to work independently and assess for themselves how well they are doing.
- The progress of those pupils who joined the school late.
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers in sustaining the school's performance during a period of staffing difficulties.
- The effectiveness of the school in promoting children's independent learning skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

The school is much smaller than others of a similar type. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low; that of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Most pupils are White British. A few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Almost a third of the pupils now in Key Stage 2 joined the school late. The school has a number of awards, including Healthy School status and the Activemark. It has been led by an acting headteacher since January 2010.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Attainment is above average. The progress pupils make and the level they attain in relation to their average starting points are good. Children currently in the Reception class are making outstanding progress.

Pupils say they are safe in school. They are highly considerate and supportive of each other and their behaviour is excellent. There is no bullying. Pupils understand that difficulties arise in relationships but they know how to reconcile differences. They have a good understanding of how to stay fit and well by eating healthy lunches and taking plenty of exercise. The older pupils help to support the younger ones as mentors and all are involved in fundraising work for others in this country and abroad. Pupils have a good understanding of how this money will enable the recipients to improve their life chances. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with their moral and cultural development being the strongest elements.

Pupils are known well by all adults. This supportive family ethos and shared values give pupils that sense of belonging which promotes well-being. This is evident in the very good working relationships seen in lessons and about the school. Teachers and teaching assistants are highly successful in breaking down barriers to learning and ensuring there is an equal chance for every boy and girl to reach their potential academically and in their personal development. Many pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable and many pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities exceed expectations. Opportunities are sometimes missed to promote pupils' discussion skills and individual improvement targets are not always used as an aid to raising attainment. There are limited opportunities for pupils' self-evaluation of their work.

The school's assessment of how well it is doing is accurate. Leaders and governors, guided by the outstanding work of the Chair of the Governing Body, have been successful in maintaining and building on pupils' good progress and achievement during a period of staffing difficulties at a senior level. There is a sense of purpose and drive in the school and morale is high. The leadership of the Reception Year is outstanding. There have been significant recent improvements to the curriculum and to the monitoring of pupils' progress. Attainment in mathematics is rising. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection in ensuring that pupils' basic skills are developed consistently across the school. Progress has been made in developing the outdoor area for the younger children but there is still work to complete. The school's capacity to build on what it has already achieved is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise attainment and further accelerate pupils' progress by:

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- making greater use of individual improvement targets
- extending opportunities for pupils to assess for themselves how well they are doing and how to improve
- providing challenging whole-class discussions to promote pupils' self-confidence and enable them to learn from the give and take of debate.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy school, are punctual and attend regularly. Attendance rates are above average. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the many extra-curricular activities they are involved in. Their achievement is good. Good teaching means that current overall progress and the quality and pace of learning seen in lessons are good for all groups, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those pupils who joined the school late and those few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Pupils enjoy learning and respond well to the interesting and challenging activities provided for them. Some potentially vulnerable pupils make excellent progress academically and in their personal development because their needs are identified at an early stage and the support they are given is highly effective. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils work independently without constant guidance. However, their ability to assess for themselves how well they are doing and think through how to improve is underdeveloped. Pupils' discussion skills are also less well developed than normally seen.

Girls generally outperform boys, although the gap is narrowing because teaching styles have been adapted to meet boys' needs. Attainment in English is higher than in mathematics. The school has rigorously assessed pupils' performance in the latter subject and has identified basic number work and calculations as the priority areas for development. As a result of the action now taken, pupils' attainment in the subject is improving. Pupils have good literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills. They are confident and articulate and are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Pupils' enjoy school because they like their teachers and the assistants, they are given interesting work to do and they feel well supported when difficulties arise. Despite some limitations in teachers' use of individual improvement targets to enable pupils to assess for themselves how well they are doing, teachers' overall use of assessments to support pupils' learning is good. They are used well to set suitably challenging and enjoyable learning activities for all groups. Teachers' monitoring of pupils' progress over time is rigorous because of the accuracy of the assessments made. Harmonious working relationships were seen in all lessons. Teachers question well to test understanding but opportunities are sometimes missed to enable pupils to learn from the give and take of whole-class discussions. There is good provision for cross-curricular working through a range of topics, and also through projects, some of which are undertaken in the wider communities the school serves. There has been an expansion in the range of enrichment activities, greatly adding to pupils' enjoyment of school and their understanding of the world around them. The curriculum provides well for the development of their basic skills and their general, all-round education. Pupils say that adults are always there to help them. They are not afraid to make mistakes because they learn in a classroom environment where pupils are encouraged and supported. A boy who was anxious to answer a question struggled to get his words out. He was given time to get his thoughts and words together and his peers waited respectfully until he got them right.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school is well managed. This is evident in pupils' high levels of enjoyment, their excellent behaviour and their above average attendance. The ambition and drive of leaders is seen in the improvements recently made to the way pupils' progress over time is monitored, to the breadth of the curriculum and to provision for mathematics where attainment is rising. The governing body knows the school well. Its members carry out their monitoring role effectively and play their part in forward planning. The leadership provided by the Chair of the Governing Body during the period of staffing difficulties has been outstanding. His close involvement in the day-to-day life of the school and his support and encouragement for staff has maintained morale. Christian values and every pupil being known well by every adult underpin the school's commitment to an equal opportunity for all. Promotion of equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work and its aspirations are understood and acted on consistently and with thorough monitoring at all levels. The exceptional progress made by potentially vulnerable pupils and the good progress made by the many pupils who join the school late give substance to that commitment. The school promotes community cohesion well. It does not serve a distinctly defined local community but admits pupils from a wide catchment area. However, it plays a full part in enhancing the life of that wider community through extensive charity work and through pupils' involvement in sporting, cultural and social activities. It also takes steps to develop pupils' understanding of community in relation to the wider world. There are also close links with community groups and with agencies to broaden the curriculum and promote pupils' well-being. Safeguarding procedures are well established, fully meet requirements and safe working is evident in daily routines. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe because of the prominence given to such matters in the curriculum. The school provides good value for money.

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

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

When they start school, the level of children's skills varies but overall it is what is expected for their age. Their speaking, listening and social skills are less well developed. However, children are quickly gaining ground in these three skill areas. The quality of children's work seen during the inspection shows that the current cohort is making excellent progress. They are exceeding expectations in their knowledge and understanding of the world around them and in their physical development. This is because the children are excited by stories of the Reception teacher's work in Africa, the insights they get into life abroad from the French teacher, the many opportunities for play and their enjoyment of dancing. Children are confident, happy and secure. They are active and independent, choosing tasks for themselves and persevering in their completion. They cooperate well in group activities, particularly apparent in one outstanding lesson seen where they shared resources and had to help each other build a winter wonderland. This stage of the children's education is exceptionally well led and managed. The Reception teacher has an excellent understanding of their needs and a creative approach to providing them with fun activities which stimulate their interest. The learning journals which map children's progress are accurate and informative. They provide an outstanding assessment base for lesson planning. She is well supported by experienced and effective assistants. There has been progress since the previous inspection in developing the outdoor play area but this is still work in progress.

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

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

A large majority of parents and carers returned completed questionnaires. Nearly all were fully supportive of the school and expressed satisfaction with the progress children are making. There were two concerns in the written comments.

The first related to staffing difficulties at a senior level. A focus of the inspection was the ability of leaders and governors to maintain and build upon pupils' good progress since such difficulties arose. There was extensive evidence to show that, not only were pupils continuing to make good progress, but that attainment in mathematics was rising, that enrichment activities had been extended considerably and that the monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress had increased in rigour. The capacity of those charged with leading and managing the school to secure further improvements is good.

The second concern related to the organisation of parents' evenings. The inspector had no first-hand evidence to follow through on this but the concern was brought to the attention of the acting headteacher and his senior colleagues.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Higham St John's Church of England 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 76 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 133 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	57	75	17	22	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	61	80	14	18	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	30	39	38	50	7	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	47	33	43	5	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	40	53	32	42	1	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	49	32	42	5	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	51	35	46	1	1	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)	25	33	42	55	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	46	36	47	3	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	41	37	49	6	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	33	40	53	7	9	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	38	50	30	39	4	5	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	44	58	31	41	0	0	1	1

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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 pupils' 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.



25 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Higham St John's Church of England Primary School, Burnley, BB12 9EU

Thank you for the warm welcome I received when I visited your school. I only wish I had had more time to see all the interesting things you are doing.

I was impressed with how hard you are working and your excellent behaviour. You show consideration and support for each other. You made a point of speaking to me about the many trips out of school and special events like the school production. You said how much these added to your enjoyment of school and to your understanding of the world around you.

Yours is a good school. You are making good progress in your work and are attaining at levels which are higher than normally seen. The children in the Reception Year are making excellent progress because they can work independently and see tasks through to the end. Please would you explain to them how impressed I was with the quality of their work.

There are always things to do to make any school even better than it already is. I have asked that you be given more opportunities to discuss your work and ideas with the class as a whole. I have also asked that you be given individual improvement targets and that more of you learn how to assess for yourselves how well you are doing and how to improve.

You can play your part by continuing to get on so well together and by working as hard as you always do.

My best wishes to you all.

Yours sincerely

Mr Brian Dower

Lead inspector

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