

Holy Trinity VC School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119357
Local Authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	358539
Inspection dates	15–16 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Brian Padgett HMI

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	297
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Andrew Holliday
Headteacher	Mr Mark Standen
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Sixteen lessons were observed, taught by 10 teachers and a higher level teaching assistant. Inspectors held meetings with staff, pupils, parents and carers, members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documentation, including that for safeguarding, and looked at the questionnaire returns from 91 parents and carers and 170 pupils.

- Inclusion, particularly for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for pupils from minority ethnic groups.
- The teaching and learning of the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics.
- The partnership between the school and early years providers.

Information about the school

Holy Trinity VC Primary is larger than most primary schools. It is situated close to Darwen town centre. It serves the local community. Most pupils are White British. Around 10% of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, the majority of whom are of Pakistani heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, 31%, is well above the national average. About a third of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, which is also well above the average.

The school has achieved the national Healthy School status and the Quality in School Study Award.

A Church of England inspection, a Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools, to examine the religious and denominational aspects of the school, took place at the same time as the school inspection. The resulting report may be obtained from the school or from the Diocese of Blackburn.

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?**3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. All partners agree that the school has been through difficult times, when pupils' attainment fell and when morale was low. All evidence points to the school emerging strongly from this dip in its fortunes. The traditional strengths of the school, its care and support for pupils, have been retained. Pupils are now making good progress as they are taught well but progress over time is satisfactory. Teachers receive clear guidance and direction from leaders and managers. The school has the confidence of parents and carers.

Holy Trinity has a very special ethos. Its exceptional welcome and friendliness extend to all pupils of whatever ability, background or age. Pupils thrive in their personal and social development, some from very low starting points. It is particularly supportive for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, especially those who have experienced trauma in their young lives. These pupils form a substantial proportion of all pupils and they make overall good progress. The headteacher and staff see the best in everyone. A visitor sees pupils in an array of different-coloured school jumpers, each denoting some achievement or skill recognised by the staff: for good learning, for helping others, for being the best, for being a peer-mediator. Pupils' self-esteem is raised and older children willingly take on significant responsibility around school. School days are busy and exciting. They begin early with a well-attended breakfast club and extend after school with a broad range of interesting extra-curricular activities, such as the radio station and the film club.

Attainment fell in the last three years to well below the national average. Pupils made inadequate progress, which has reduced the progress judgement to satisfactory, overall. Underpinning work to effect improvement has taken place since the previous inspection. Its impact can be seen most clearly in Key Stage 1, where attainment rose to broadly average in 2010. However, in Key Stage 2, where the legacy of poorer teaching is most keenly felt, it has required longer to eradicate the shortfalls of the past. To date, no Year 6 group has attained national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. However, pupils' progress is now good in each class. Improvement has been the result of a number of factors, including more rigorous leadership and management and a step change in the quality of provision, including teaching and within the curriculum.

The leadership of the headteacher has been instrumental in bringing about improvement. He has the full support of the governing body and the local authority. Partnerships with others are good. They are outstanding in the main school but are not as strong in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where local nurseries are not fully involved by the school in transition to school. The school is well placed to sustain improvement and is determined to do so. It evaluates its work rigorously and staff work cohesively with a common purpose in planning for improvement. They increasingly take responsibility for developing practice

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and overseeing progress, as can be seen in the growing size of the leadership team. Learning is made more exciting and active for pupils and frequently takes place out of classrooms and in the community. Lessons make good use of the extensive school grounds, which include an allotment. By contrast, the outdoor area for the Reception classes is far too small. Overall, the school is well-resourced. It provides satisfactory value for money.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring pupils make consistently good progress, year-on-year
 - building the pupils' capacity to assess the effectiveness of their learning
 - ensuring teaching meets pupils' individual learning needs and teaches pupils in ways they learn best.
- Improve the quality of the outdoor learning environment for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Establish more effective links with the local providers of childcare and early education in order to ensure the smoothest and best of transitions to school for children entering the Reception classes.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

The grade for outcomes, satisfactory, is influenced by the inadequate attainment of recent years, reflected in the grade 4 for attainment in the table below. It is balanced with the better progress now being made by pupils across the school.

Between 2008 and 2010, attainment at Year 6 was well below the national average. Pupils actually made better progress in 2010, as improvements started to take effect. However, as a very high proportion of the pupils, nearly three quarters, had learning difficulties, attainment remained low for most pupils. Currently, almost 90% of the current Year 6 cohort is making the expected progress, much better than in previous years, with attainment on course to reach national average levels. All through Key Stage 2, pupils are now making good progress. The picture is even more positive in Key Stage 1, where attainment is now at national average levels.

About a third of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Of these, about 30 pupils in number have complex needs and receive support from a wide range of education, health and social service agencies. These pupils are very happy here. They receive a great deal of one-to-one support to help their specific needs and are included in all the school's activities. They make good progress. Other groups, such as pupils of different ethnic backgrounds, are completely integrated within the school and make the same progress as their peers.

Pupils enjoy learning, particularly in English and when lessons keep them active and engaged. They are gaining a good appreciation of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle through the school's promotion of healthy food and exercise. Behaviour is good, the

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school is orderly. Attendance is average, although the school goes to extreme lengths to reach this level, providing pupils with bus passes if necessary.

Although the great majority of pupils said they felt very safe at school and had confidence in their teachers to protect them, some said, and their parents and carers agreed, they occasionally felt concerned about the behaviour of certain pupils. In practice, pupils with behavioural, emotional and social problems make good progress in dealing with their issues, but problems occur from time to time. The work of the peer mediators is effective here, a group of older pupils, kitted out with purple jumpers, is on hand to help. Pupils are acquiring a set of skills for their future life that is satisfactory, overall. Their growing confidence, exercise of responsibility and increasing aspirations are strong plus points, but these positive outcomes are tempered by the fact that many pupils have left with low levels of basic skills.

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to their school and the wider community. Older pupils are good role models for younger ones. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are acquiring a clear sense of the importance of virtues that are not material and to which we cannot attach a price. Pupils make a significant contribution to running their school, for example, through the active school council, through play leaders, in assemblies, by peer mediation and by helping others in general. They frequently involve the local community in their work, where they have run a shop selling goods they have made in school and by using the community as an audience to show people what they have been learning about in school.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
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	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
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?

The most striking aspect of the school's provision is its care, support and guidance for all pupils. It is a most nurturing environment, one in which pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem, regardless of their background, age or ability. This makes it a very happy school. Care extends to all, but particularly to the pupils whose circumstances may have made them vulnerable. Staff form close, caring relationships with these pupils and ensure that external support is well coordinated. The special educational needs coordinator has a list of up to 60 agencies from health, education and social care, including the voluntary sector, with whom she works. Care, guidance and support are good rather than outstanding because the school should tighten some of its procedures for the safeguarding of pupils.

Teaching is good. No inadequate teaching was observed and some lessons had outstanding features. Working to improve teaching and to motivate pupils is a central, successful theme in the school's improvement plans. Planning is effective, teachers are clear where pupils are up to and clear about what they have to learn. Teachers increasingly get pupils down to work quickly, making best use of the teaching assistants to work in small groups. The few less-effective lessons were those where teachers taught the class as a whole for too long, so failing to make the work relevant for individual pupils. In good lessons, pupils are generally active in and involved in assessing their work, talking

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with teachers about what comes next, raising aspirations of what they might achieve. This work, seen mostly with older pupils, is still being embedded across the school.

The curriculum is of good quality. It has a strong emphasis on provision for the basic skills, which are taught well, and also on developing pupils' personal skills. There is a good range of intervention programmes available for pupils who have fallen behind or require specific programmes to help them. A significant impetus to pupils' enjoyment of the curriculum is due to the school's involvement with artists of various disciplines to involve pupils more in their learning. Teachers have worked with performing arts specialists to develop projects that have captured the interests and imagination of pupils, and which have motivated them to read, write and achieve success. The curriculum is extended at both ends of the school day. Activities during the breakfast club and after-school are very popular with pupils and add significantly to pupils' learning and enjoyment. Technology features highly in the curriculum, for example, encouraged by the school, the pupils have access to e-learning at home. They also run a radio station in school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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 headteacher has worked hard to instil his vision for the school and recover its fortunes. It has not been straightforward and only now is the impact of his work being felt throughout the school. The final phase to see a sustained rise in pupils' attainment has yet to be achieved. The headteacher has gradually built capacity in his senior team and is extending leadership to a broader range of staff. They are beginning to work effectively with their colleagues. The greatest success is with the improvement of teaching and learning, as teaching is now good. The monitoring of teaching and learning is well established. The headteacher has the confidence and support of the governing body, who work closely with the senior leadership in the school's self-evaluation. Equality of opportunity is promoted well: the school is a fair and open community where pupils have a voice and where discrimination is not tolerated. The school's partnership with parents and carers is good; they fully appreciate the extraordinary care the school provides for their children and they remain loyal to the school. The partnerships with other agencies, particularly to support the learning and emotional needs of pupils, is excellent. However, partnerships with other early years providers is not well developed. Arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactory. The school has a strong sense of community, and promotes this at school and local level well. The school has links with a school where pupils are of a different ethnic mix and broader links internationally.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
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	3
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises two Reception classes sharing a large classroom. Nearly all children joining the school have pre-school experience in one of the many early education providers in the area. However, on entry, children's language development and social skills are often well below those seen in children of this age. Much of the focus of the learning in Reception is on improving children's communication and language skills and their personal and social development. Children make good progress. Outcomes vary from year to year but in 2010, children's levels of understanding and development matched those of most children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children enjoy school. They enjoy sessions with their teachers and become engrossed in their play. They concentrate well individually and they often play well with other children, indicating that their social skills are developing well.

Teachers and assistants are skilled at incorporating meaningful learning into enjoyable activities and record progress effectively. This was observed when shape, number work and letter recognition were introduced naturally as children prepared sandwiches and biscuits for a picnic later in the day. Teachers make frequent use of the school's extensive grounds. The outdoor area attached to the classroom is an improvement on the provision at the time of the previous inspection. However, it is small and does not provide the full outdoor learning opportunities required in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teachers have developed a good partnership with parents and carers, visiting most in their homes before the children start school. However, the partnership with early years providers in the area's nurseries and play schools is not well developed, precluding the routine sharing of information in order to provide the smoothest of transitions for children as they enter school.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. They feel the staff are very caring of their children and several commented on the very positive difference the headteacher had made since he took over three years ago. They felt the school was 'on the up'. An analysis of the returned questionnaires from parents and carers indicated that a minority were concerned about behaviour and whether this was handled well enough. Inspectors looked at this issue in some detail. This is what they found. The school has a deserved reputation within the community for being an inclusive school, one that is effective in educating and caring for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. With the support and guidance of the staff, pupils who have experienced trauma in their lives make good progress in managing their behaviour and emotions and in developing their social skills. However, progress is not always smooth, and such pupils sometimes have bad days. The school actively encourages pupils to help each other solve problems, through training older pupils as 'peer mediators'. They wear special purple jumpers so other pupils can recognise them. Overall, the school shows a high level of care for all its pupils. Nevertheless, parents and carers are right to be vigilant of their children's well-being and discuss their concerns with the school. Inspectors found that the staff and, in particular the headteacher, to be approachable and responsive to parents' concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Holy Trinity VC 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 91 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 297 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	48	53	40	44	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	51	56	38	42	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	43	47	44	48	3	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	47	42	46	1	1	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	49	54	38	42	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	43	47	52	2	2	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	40	53	58	0	0	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)	30	33	55	60	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	42	46	46	51	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	33	45	49	9	10	5	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	35	52	57	5	5	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	44	48	40	44	4	4	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	49	54	37	41	3	3	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



17 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holy Trinity VC School, Darwen, BB3 2RW

You may remember inspectors visited your school a few weeks ago to see how well you were getting on with learning. I have written a report for your parents and carers but this letter is for you, to tell you what we found out. Thank you to all those pupils, including the school council, who talked to inspectors during the visit. Your views helped us to come to our judgements.

Our records show that the school has not been at its best for several years. Pupils left for secondary school, on average, with low standards. I am very pleased to report that Holy Trinity is now improving fast. Under Mr Standen's leadership and with much hard work from your teachers and support staff, you are doing much better in your learning. Year 6 pupils are on course to achieve well in the national tests for eleven year-olds. Pupils in other classes are also making good progress in their lessons.

Holy Trinity is a good place to be if you find learning difficult, because you get good support in lessons. It is also a good place to be if, because of bad things that have happened in your life, you have problems trusting people or believe you are no good. You also get help that makes things better. Not just from teachers and staff, you get support from the other children. Think 'peer mediator'!

One thing about the school that has not changed is that it remains a really friendly and welcoming school. You told us you were proud of your school. You like your teachers. They are kind to you and show you respect. We thought your behaviour was good. You were very polite to us, as visitors. Your lessons are interesting and you are advanced in your use of modern technologies. We saw some very exciting projects and heard of others that involved you setting up a shop in town and parading as Vikings!

There must be few schools where you can have such a good breakfast before you begin lessons and we saw some of the many activities you get involved in after school, such as the radio club, the film club, netball training and the choir.

We judged your school to be satisfactory. This means it does many things well but that it could do some things better. We want to see your standards rise in English and mathematics particularly. We are confident they are doing. Even so, your teachers will need to keep working hard to make sure that gaps in your learning, from the time when the teaching was not as good as it is now, are closed. We believe the school should work more closely with local nurseries before you even arrive at Holy Trinity! And finally, we would really like to see Reception children enjoying outdoor learning more by creating a much better outdoor area outside their class than the one they have now.

Even as we were leaving the school, Mr Standen and the staff were planning to take action on the points we raised. That is good!

On behalf of the inspectors, I hope your school continues to get better and better.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Padgett

Her Majesty's Inspector

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