

Banks Methodist School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119405
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	358548
Inspection dates	23-24 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Lynne Read

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	46
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Almond
Headteacher	Jean Morris
Date of previous school inspection	18 September 2007
School address	Chapel Lane Banks Southport Merseyside PR9 8EY
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited eight lessons and observed four teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, managers, staff and groups of pupils and informal discussions with parents and carers took place. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' workbooks, assessment records, school policies and school development plans. In total, 20 parental questionnaires were received, analysed and considered, alongside 18 questionnaires completed by the pupils and 11 by school staff.

Information about the school

This school is much smaller than most primary schools and pupils are taught in two classes. It is situated in a rural area and some pupils attend from outside the immediate locality; all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is double the average, as is the percentage of those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. A much higher than average number of pupils has a statement of special educational needs. In some year groups, there is a high incidence of pupils joining the school part way through a key stage. In the past three years the school has met the government's floor targets. The school holds the Activemark, Healthy School status and two Learning Excellence awards.

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	2
Achievement	2
Teaching	2
Leadership and management	2
Behaviour and safety	2
Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	Yes
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	Yes
Does the school provide value for money?	Yes

Key findings

Banks Methodist is a good school.

Pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who arrive part way through a key stage, achieve well from their starting points.

Children in the Reception year make good progress but opportunities for independent learning are sometimes missed. This is due to some lack of detail in planning, classroom organisation and staff training.

Across the school, behaviour is good, pupils feel safe and relationships are excellent. Attendance is high, pupils are punctual and they demonstrate a keen interest in learning.

It is recognised for the good work done in partnership with the church and community. The strong links with the church support pupils' personal development very well.

Teaching is good and generally caters well for the mixed-ages in each class.

Pupils use their understanding of letters and sounds to read confidently. Sometimes, however, there is an insufficient emphasis on using these skills to promote spelling and the teaching of letters and sounds is not yet extended into Key Stage 2 for those who need it.

Good leadership and management ensure a high standard of care. The headteacher provides good leadership; performance is monitored closely and ambitious targets

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are set through development planning. This ensures that good achievement is maintained and identified issues are tackled promptly.

The curriculum is well adapted to ensure progression in learning and provides a broad range of practical and creative experiences. However, there are insufficient opportunities for the more-able and older pupils in Key Stage 1 to practise and consolidate their writing when working on subjects across the curriculum.

Links with parents and carers are excellent and they hold the school in high regard. Excellent communication systems ensure a constant dialogue between home and school so that parents and carers feel that they are informed well and are able to support their children's learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve opportunities for independent learning for the Reception age children by:
 - developing the indoor area and resources so children have continual access to a wider range of activities
 - ensuring that planning always stipulates the opportunities for children to explore, investigate and engage in independent learning
 - ensuring that all relevant staff have the expertise they need to successfully promote child-led learning.
- Improve teaching and learning in letters and sounds by:
 - ensuring that all lessons include a stronger emphasis on spelling and writing
 - extending the programme into Key Stage 2 for those who need it.
- Improve opportunities for writing across the curriculum for the more- able and older pupils in Key Stage 1.

Main report

When children enter the Reception class they have a range of skills that are below expectations generally for the age group. Good induction procedures, including home visits, ensure that children settle quickly. Teaching is good and children often benefit from working alongside the Key Stage 1 pupils in the class, especially in terms of language and personal skills. For example, the whole class read the story of The Rainbow Fish, sharing ideas enthusiastically about the characters and plot. Often, Reception age children are encouraged to follow their own lines of enquiry and explore their world. However, there are times when planning is vague, teaching is too directed and the scope for independent learning is limited. For example, on one occasion, children's role play was directed by an adult and opportunities were missed to provide them with free choice activities to develop their creative, communication and emerging literacy skills.

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During Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils make good progress and standards are broadly average by the time they leave school. Most pupils are confident readers by the age of six. By the time they leave school in Year 6, most have reached or exceeded the expected standard and they read a range of fiction and non-fiction material with good understanding. Their research skills are well developed. Some lessons to develop letters and sounds, however, do not incorporate enough attention on using these skills to spell and write. Some younger pupils in Key Stage 2 do not receive sufficient additional work in this area to support their spelling because the programme is currently restricted to Key Stage 1. Teachers work diligently to find texts, activities and topics that interest boys so the gap between their learning and that of the girls is closing quickly. For example, in one mathematics lesson, boys especially enjoyed exploring numbers, and producing formulae to explain the patterns between them. In these small cohorts, teachers know their pupils very well and plan work and support to meet individual needs. This is one factor underpinning the good progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the often rapid progress of those who transfer to the school part way through a key stage.

Pupils are thoughtful and polite. They assert that incidents of bullying are rare and are confident that adults deal swiftly with any worries or issues they express. All of those who completed the questionnaire and talked to the inspector agreed that the school deals with bullying well and that they feel safe. Good relationships exist and pupils show kindness and care towards each other. Older pupils often look after the younger ones at playtimes and as one commented 'school is like a big family'. Staff have good expertise in dealing with emotional or behavioural difficulties and there have been no exclusions or transfers. All parents and carers who replied to the questionnaire agreed that behaviour is good, there are no disruptions to lessons and their children are safe and happy. Pupils have a very good awareness of moral and social issues and show respect for cultures and beliefs that are different from their own. Partnerships with schools in Africa and a local Faith Mission provide good opportunities for pupils to learn about life in different countries and world religions. Spiritual development is supported well through good links with the church. During the inspection, the vicar led an uplifting assembly and many pupils attend the JAM club, where they explore issues pertinent to their lives. Links with the local community are good and the weekly Friendship Café, run by pupils themselves, is a popular feature. The good quality of care, guidance and support contributes much to pupils' good personal development, their high levels of attendance and the good progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Lessons generally have clear objectives and good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning. Teachers assess pupils' progress frequently in order to plan tasks that build systematically on prior learning, maturity and interests. Teaching assistants often provide good, targeted support for groups. For example, the introductions to lessons often take place in two or three ability groups so new learning is tailored accurately to needs, enabling pupils to move on swiftly to their independent tasks. There are, however, some gaps in

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expertise among staff, and issues in planning, that reduce the effectiveness of independent learning in the Reception Year. An outdoor classroom has been imaginatively developed for this age group, but the indoor learning area includes only a basic selection of free-choice activities. The curriculum includes intervention strategies and personalised teaching programmes to ensure pupils' needs are met and that they achieve their learning goals. Key Stage 2 pupils have good opportunities to write, for example, during their topic work. In Key Stage 1, however, the more-able and older pupils have too many worksheets or simple exercises that require only a limited response, although their English books show that they are capable of writing at length and to a good standard. Marking is generally good and teachers give constructive feedback and set helpful targets to indicate the next steps for pupils. A good selection of after-school clubs enhances pupils' development well and encourages them to try out new interests.

The headteacher provides good leadership and clear direction. Teamwork is good and staff are focused on providing the best for pupils. The school is well run on a day-to-day basis; procedures and policies are consistently followed and value for money is good. Staff pay good attention to ensuring that no groups of pupils are discriminated against or disadvantaged, so all have an equal opportunity to succeed. Good partnerships with outside specialists ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have the expert support or resources that they need to succeed. An improved system for tracking pupils' progress means that the headteacher has an accurate view of each individual's achievements, and together with the results of monitoring teaching and learning, this information is used well to plan whole-school developments. As a result, there have been improvements in mathematics this year and in boys' writing, demonstrating a good capacity for the school to make further improvements over time. Safeguarding, including child protection, is given a high priority and all requirements are met. Staff have regular updates in their child protection training and are well equipped to deal with any concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Banks Methodist 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 inspector received 20 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 46 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	14	70	4	20	0	0	0	0
Q2 My child feels safe at school	17	85	3	15	0	0	0	0
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	18	90	2	10	0	0	0	0
Q4 The school meets my child’s particular needs	18	90	2	10	0	0	0	0
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	18	90	2	10	0	0	0	0
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	17	85	3	15	0	0	0	0
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	14	70	6	30	0	0	0	0
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	16	80	3	15	0	0	0	0
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	15	75	4	20	0	0	0	0
Q10 The school helps me to support my child’s learning	16	80	4	20	0	0	0	0
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	18	90	2	10	0	0	0	0
Q12 The school is well led and managed	17	85	3	15	0	0	0	0

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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 achievement of all pupils. ■ Behaviour and safety. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The effectiveness of leadership and management. <p>and taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
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 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Banks Methodist School, Southport PR 9 8EY

Thank you for the very warm welcome and lovely smiles you gave me when I visited your school. I thoroughly enjoyed my time with you and appreciated all the help you gave me.

Banks Methodist is a good school. Your behaviour is good and you all get on very well together. You are a credit to yourselves, your families and your school. Thank you to the pupils who filled in their questionnaire and those who chatted with me. It is good to hear comments such as 'we have lots of fun lessons', 'everyone is friendly' and 'it's the best school ever!'

You are keen to learn, work hard and are making good progress. The children in the Reception group enjoy their work and play. They are doing well but would benefit from more independent activities. In Years 1 to 3 you use your letters and sounds work to help you read but not so well to help you spell. Your writing has improved, but some of you in Key Stage 1 do not have enough time to practise your skills when working on other subjects, such as your topic work. I think the school could be even better so I have asked your teachers to:

- make sure that the Reception age children can have a good selection of activities throughout the day and good opportunities to work independently
- make sure the work on letters and sounds helps you to spell as well as to read
- extend the letters and sounds work into Key Stage 2 for those who need it
- make sure that the confident writers in Key Stage 1 have lots of opportunities to practise their skills, for example, when working on topics.

You can help by continuing to work hard, completing your homework and keeping up the good home reading. Thank you once again for the interesting conversations I had and for letting me share your work and play. Please accept my best wishes for the future and continue to enjoy your happy school.

Yours sincerely

Lynne Read
Lead inspector

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