

Dalton St Michael's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119493
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	379817
Inspection dates	27–28 March 2012
Lead inspector	Clare Henderson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	61
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maureen Faulkner
Headteacher	Adele Robinson
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2009
School address	Higher Lane Dalton Wigan WN8 7RP
Telephone number	01257 462082
Fax number	01257 462082
Email address	bursar@dalton-st-michaels.lancs.sch.uk



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Introduction

Inspection team

Clare Henderson

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed 10 lessons taught by four teachers, listened to individual pupils reading in Years 1, 2 and 6 and scrutinised pupils' work. She held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at documents relating to safeguarding, pupils' progress and attainment and the way in which the school evaluates its own performance. There were no responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to consider when planning the inspection. The inspector analysed the 24 completed questionnaires received from parents and carers and those from staff and pupils.

Information about the school

This school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average. All pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school meets the current floor standard, whereby the government sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The school has gained Active Mark, Healthy School status and Eco Bronze and Silver status. The school has had an unsettled time of staff changes including three associate headteachers since the last inspection. A permanent headteacher was appointed in September 2011.

The school runs breakfast- and after-school clubs and a pre-school toddler group, the Dalton Dinkies. These were considered as part of this inspection.

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 of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. Pupils, parents and carers overwhelmingly agree with this view. 'It's a small school and it's like belonging to one big happy family' is a comment typical of those made during the inspection. Overall effectiveness is good rather than outstanding because the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement is not consistently outstanding.
- Children make good progress and achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. All groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make at least good progress and achievement is good in Years 1 to 6. When they leave school in Year 6 pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above average for all groups of pupils.
- Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and feel safe. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying, including verbal, physical and racist. They say bullying is very rare and is dealt with quickly by staff if it does occur.
- The quality of teaching is good with outstanding practice evident. Teachers and support staff are attentive to pupils' personal needs. They are successful in motivating pupils to work hard in the great majority of lessons. However, on occasion the pace of learning slows when tasks in lessons do not consistently match pupils' abilities or provide enough challenge, especially for the more able.
- The headteacher has successfully galvanised and restored staff morale after an unsettled period of change. Senior leaders and members of the governing body have given high priority to reviewing the school's performance and improving the quality of teaching and learning. The next step in its journey is to increase the involvement of curriculum leaders in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning within all the subjects of the curriculum.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement to outstanding in all year groups by ensuring tasks in all lessons consistently match pupils' abilities and provide enough challenge, especially for the more able.
- Raise the quality of leadership and management to outstanding by fully involving curriculum leaders in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning within all the subjects of the curriculum.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers agree with the inspection that their children make good progress. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress from their often below expected starting points in learning to work and play independently, with others and with adults. For example, children were observed painting pictures and writing sentences to describe what they could see within the school's outdoor environment and happily and confidently discussed what they were doing with an adult.

There has been a dip in Key Stage 1 linked to staff changes and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was below the levels expected in 2009 and 2010. The school has effectively closed this gap with strong teaching and support from the local authority. Attainment now in Key Stage 1 is broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has accelerated progress for the pupils affected by the previous disturbances who are now in Years 3 and 4. Their attainment is now broadly average and rapidly improving. Achievement is now good throughout the school and attainment in Year 6 is above average in reading, writing and mathematics.

Progress in all year groups in reading, writing and mathematics during this school year is at least good and for a significant minority outstanding. Pupils throughout the school make good progress in learning to read and write with fluency and they use these skills well when working in other subjects. In Year 2 pupils' attainment in reading is average and above average in Year 6. By the end of Year 2 the large majority can use a variety of skills, including letters and sounds to decode text and to read with understanding. By the end of Year 6 pupils read fluently and this promotes their learning effectively in other subjects.

Learning is effective in lessons. In writing and mathematics progress is good because pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to extend their writing and problem-solving skills across all the subjects they study. A strong focus on promoting pupils' speaking and listening skills enables pupils to discuss and refine their ideas for inclusion in their writing. For example, in an English lesson with an historical focus older pupils discussed and used imaginative language to describe the temples of ancient Greece, for example, writing 'they had an odd irregularity to them because they were crumbled and rough'. Occasionally, lessons are not sufficiently challenging

when too much time is spent in explaining tasks and this leads to the more able, especially, not always making enough progress. The school uses data very effectively to identify any pupil who is showing signs of not making expected progress and these pupils are given extra support and help, often through teaching in small groups. There remain, however, some occasions in lessons when a few pupils are not learning as much as they could because the tasks do not always match their abilities. Through good support and extra provision disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress.

Quality of teaching

Teachers are efficient at structuring lessons that run smoothly. They inform pupils of what they are expected to learn and how they will measure success. This ensures that pupils concentrate their efforts to best effect. Teachers use a wide variety of teaching strategies and a well-conceived curriculum to successfully do this. This ensures lessons capture pupils' interest and build well on previous skills and experiences. This is also the case in the Early Years Foundation Stage where an imaginative array of activities sustains children's interest. Pupils' books in Key Stages 1 and 2 shows that they are expected to complete good amounts of work and good progress is evident in the books of pupils of all ability. Pupils are particularly enthusiastic in lessons which are interactive and fast-moving, such as when they are discovering facts about different weather conditions when undertaking the Polar Regions topic.

The vast majority of lessons seen during the inspection moved with pace and vigour. However, occasionally, because activities in lessons are not matched closely enough to pupils' abilities, they become distracted and go off task. A minority of pupils feel that sometimes they could be challenged to learn more. This is particularly the case for the more-able pupils when expectations of their work are not high enough. Teachers give careful attention to helping pupils develop good spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding through themes begun in assemblies and continued in lessons. For instance, pupils praise the assemblies which considered Olympic values such as determination, perseverance and equality and say these emphasised the importance of doing your best, listening to others and valuing their opinion. Pupils say they enjoy homework which plays a strong and effective part in promoting learning. They particularly like having to research or develop PowerPoint presentations about the topics they study.

Pupils are provided with high-quality feedback about how well they are doing and how to improve their work in all the subjects they study. The use of detailed information about what is required to reach particular levels focuses their efforts particularly well. The good skills of teaching assistants are used well to support pupils in class but their skills are particularly effectively utilised when they are teaching groups of pupils who have been identified as in need of small group tuition. The vast majority of parents and carers believe that teaching is good and inspection evidence supports this view.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents and carers report that behaviour in school is good. Lessons are managed in a way that promotes learning well. Pupils say that lessons are very rarely interrupted because of inappropriate behaviour and, if this happens, adults are quick to deal with it effectively. This was borne out by inspection observations and analysis of the school's behavioural records which provide strong support for behaviour being consistently good over time. Pupils are clear about what behaviour is expected of them and any failure to live up to the high expectations is dealt with fairly and consistently. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers do not express any concerns about bullying. Pupils say that bullying is rare and, again, on the few occasions when it occurs it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils' knowledge of the possible different forms of bullying is good.

The vast majority of pupils work hard and do their best. They gain skills that prepare them well for the next stage of their education, for example in gaining resilience in working at activities that they find difficult. Pupils' enthusiasm only drops when they feel that a part of their lesson is not fully appropriate to their learning needs or not sufficiently challenging. Pupils feel very safe and secure in school and parents are overwhelmingly positive about this aspect of the school's provision. Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe, and show attention to this and the safety of others when playing in the school playground. They also are aware of risks outside school and have strategies to enable them to minimise this. For example, pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. Attendance for the vast majority of pupils is above average and there are good levels of punctuality.

Leadership and management

Senior leaders and members of the governing body have identified successfully what is working well and what needs attention and secured the necessary improvements since the last inspection. Actions have successfully accelerated rates of progress among all groups of pupils and raised attainment throughout the school. The detailed use of progress data to identify and address individual needs is very effective and rigorous in ensuring good equality of opportunity. This is clear in the speedy response to previous weaknesses in Key Stage 1 and the attention now being given to the more-able pupils. Although a few aspects of teaching require attention the overall strategies to improve the quality of the teaching and learning are effective. Currently, curriculum leaders do not play a full part in the monitoring process to identify how best to improve provision in their subjects. Nevertheless, staff have improved their understanding of what makes the best teaching through well-targeted training and support. The vast majority of parents and carers share this view and say that they would recommend the school to another parent. These improvements and respect from parents and carers indicate a strong capacity to improve further.

As well as meeting needs and promoting good progress, the curriculum is effective in providing pupils, despite it being a small school, with a wide range of additional activities, for example in sport, music and through good-quality before-and after-school clubs. Pupils told the inspector how much they enjoyed these events. They confirm these activities add enjoyment to their learning. Children in the Reception Year are given good opportunities, with adults and independently, to work inside and

in the well-provided-for outdoor environment. Good links between curriculum subjects through topic work make learning interesting and enable pupils to use and apply literacy, mathematics and creative skills effectively across the curriculum. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and successfully promoted through these stimulating activities as well as through strong relationships and good personal, social and health education. Pupils' understanding of life in a multicultural society is developing but not as strongly as the other aspects of pupils' personal development.

The governing body and staff ensure that safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements and ensure that the school is a safe place for everyone. Members of the governing body are proactive in supporting and challenging the school, ensuring that no pupil is discriminated against and in providing parents and carers with an additional channel for discussing the work of the school.

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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



29 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dalton St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Wigan WN8 7RP

I really enjoyed my time in your school and one of the highlights was talking to so many of you. You will be pleased to know that I agree with you that yours is a good school.

These are some of the things I liked best. You make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. You are articulate and intelligent in the way you discuss what you are doing with your classmates and with adults. Teaching is good and helps you to be interested in what you are doing. You work hard in class and are very keen to do the best that you can. Everyone in school takes good care of you. This makes you feel safe and secure. Behaviour is good and you understand that you are responsible for making good decisions about what is the correct thing to do. I read the comments made by your parents and carers. The vast majority were very pleased with all that your teachers do to help you to learn and enjoy school. Please thank them for taking the time to write to us.

Your headteacher, other staff and the governing body are determined to make your school even better. To make things even better, I have asked your headteacher, members of the governing body and teachers to:

- make sure the work you do in all lessons matches your abilities and provides enough challenge, especially for the more-able pupils
- to ensure all curriculum leaders are fully involved in checking the quality of teaching and learning within all the subjects of the curriculum.

I hope you will play your part by continuing to work hard and to do your best to make your school even better.

Yours sincerely

Clare Henderson
Lead inspector

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