

Overton St Helen's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119539
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	379831
Inspection dates	16–17 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Peter Cox

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	171
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Gallagher
Headteacher	Jill Milligan
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Thirteen lessons were seen taught by six teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils from each year group, school councillors, the Chair of the Governing Body, a local authority representative and teaching and non-teaching staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including governing body meeting minutes, the school's self-evaluation documents, progress data and the school development plan. An analysis of 79 parent and carer questionnaire responses was made, together with staff and pupil questionnaire responses. Informal discussions were held with parents and carers at the start and end of the school day.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- What evidence there is to show that pupils achieve as well as they should across all years.
- Inspectors investigated whether teaching is challenging enough to help pupils reach their potential.
- The team examined whether the curriculum is sufficiently well matched to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Inspectors looked to see whether the school's systems for monitoring and evaluating its performance are accurate.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average primary school with an equal number of boys and girls. The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is less than that seen nationally. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. The current headteacher was not in post at the time of the previous inspection. The school has a number of awards, including Healthy Schools status.

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

Overton St Helen's is a satisfactory school, but one which has many areas of strength including the Early Years Foundation Stage, teaching and a curriculum which helps support pupils' personal development. Pupils enjoy coming to school, shown by their high levels of attendance. They feel safe and secure and speak well of the school council's involvement in helping bring about improvements in school meals, which now include healthy alternatives and are enjoyed by many. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and reflects the strong ethos and character promoted through daily acts of prayer and worship. Pupils take on responsibilities with enthusiasm and pride and most have a genuine caring attitude to one another. Pupils' academic progress during their time at school is satisfactory overall. Children begin the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and attributes that are generally in line with those expected for their age and pupils make satisfactory progress overall across the school. However, progress is inconsistent across year groups and early gains made in learning are not sufficiently well built upon throughout Key Stage 2, resulting in broadly average attainment by the time pupils leave.

A high proportion of the teaching seen during the inspection was of a good quality, incorporating realistic levels of challenge for all. The school monitors the quality of teaching and sets a high priority for its further improvement. Senior leaders set a good example in their teaching for others to follow. Leaders and managers, including members of the governing body, are working effectively to ensure staffing issues in Year 4 are not affecting pupils' progress unduly.

The school has developed an accurate system for tracking pupils' progress that has enabled the school to intervene in most areas, so that pupils' performance is at least in line with expectations. However, not all teachers use this data well enough to plan their teaching to meet the full range of abilities in their classes. Pupils' progress in English is well monitored but progress in mathematics is slower because assessment procedures are not fully embedded. Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent across the school. The curriculum provides well for all pupils and ensures the range of needs and abilities are met. Care, guidance and support are good, with many of the teaching assistants, in the stronger lessons, well deployed and providing well for groups of pupils and individuals.

The school has secured improvements since the previous inspection in terms of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision and attainment in English at the higher levels

across both key stages. It knows itself well and has good systems for monitoring and evaluating its performance. It has developed targeted improvement plans that focus on raising pupils' achievement further. Consequently, it demonstrates satisfactory capacity to sustain its improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement of all pupils and particularly those in Key Stage 2 and in mathematics by:
 - increasing the proportion of good and better teaching seen in the school and sharing the stronger practice more widely
 - embedding further the assessment procedures in mathematics
 - ensuring that all pupils' work is marked regularly so that pupils understand more clearly their next steps in learning and that corrections are completed and re-marked
 - using assessment data to better inform lesson planning so that it targets specific ability groups more effectively.

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.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils are happy to come to school and most engage well in their learning when teaching is active and at a pace to maintain interest. Classrooms are bright, well maintained and resources generally used well to assist learning. Overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily during their time at school given their starting points. Good progress is made in the Early Years Foundation Stage and helped secure above-average attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2011, a recovery from weaker performance in 2010. Pupils' attainment in mathematics, while improving, is not as strong as in reading or writing. Pupils' progress is satisfactory but is accelerating due to good teaching. This is evident from pupils' books and in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same satisfactory progress, because of the targeted support that includes one-to-one and small group sessions to improve speaking and writing. Pupils get along well together in the mixed-aged classes and behaviour is good overall. They know who to turn to on the rare occasions when they are made to feel uncomfortable by others. Pupils take on responsibilities well such as monitors, buddies and salad bar assistants at lunchtime. Their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is underpinned by the school's ethos and is evident in pupils' considerate approach to and understanding of one another.

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	3
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	3
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	2
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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is of a good quality overall. During the inspection none was seen to be inadequate and the majority of teaching observed was good. In these lessons, pupils were often engaged in a variety of activities that stimulated discussion and challenged them to think hard about solving problems. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils came up with several ways of calculating the area of an irregular shape and could confidently explain the different methods. Learning and progress in the stronger lessons are good overall. Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent across classes. Some marking informs pupils how to make the necessary next steps in their learning while other marking is only an acknowledgement of the work being seen and does not help improvement. Corrections are often asked of pupils but there is no revisiting of this by the pupils or the teachers.

The curriculum is well suited to pupils' needs and is reviewed periodically. It places appropriate emphasis on the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills. Pupils say they enjoy the opportunities to be active, energetic and to participate in a range of sports. Additional activities are well attended and enjoyed by the pupils, as are the educational visits undertaken and the range of visitors to the school.

Care, guidance and support are a strength. Movement from one key stage to another is successful and pupils and parents feel well supported, as shown in their responses to school questionnaires. Good links with a range of external agencies ensure that pupils, particularly those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, receive timely specialist support when this is needed. Older pupils feel ready to move to secondary school, although admit to being a little apprehensive. Support in lessons for individuals and groups is most effective when the teacher targets other adults to help pupils who require support and accurate assessments are made of their impact on pupils' learning.

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

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?

Since taking up her post, the headteacher, ably assisted by her leadership team, has set appropriate improvement priorities. These are well targeted and include improving the quality of teaching to help raise achievement. Assessment strategies employed in English are applied to mathematics but these are not fully embedded and it is too early to see whether they are securing more rapid rates of progress. However, improvements are having a positive impact, although better achievement as a result of higher quality teaching has yet to be evidenced in the school's published results. The management of teaching and learning is of a good quality. Lesson observations are undertaken regularly and specific child-centred targets set. Leaders and managers understand what good and outstanding teaching and learning look like, although judgements on the quality of teaching are sometimes over-inflated. Middle leaders have an increasing role in ensuring best practice is shared. Governors are fully supportive of the school and hold it to account satisfactorily. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Gaps between the performance of boys and girls are closing and good strategies are in place to allow all pupils an equal opportunity to succeed. The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. Pupils have a clear understanding of their own religious, ethnic and social context but that of the wider world is less well-developed.

These are the grades for the 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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children given their starting points are good. They make good progress towards the early learning goals, although some aspects of writing are the weakest areas of development. Good care, guidance and support are provided for children's welfare and match that for the rest of the school. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified quickly, although assessment by all staff requires more accuracy. All areas of learning are covered and welfare requirements are successfully met. Children in Reception have opportunities to share worship and prayers with Key Stage 1 pupils as well as playing together at break and lunchtime. There is an appropriate mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities, although adults do not always facilitate children's own explorations. Planning is good and ensures activities are linked to the main topics where possible. Assessments are undertaken regularly but require some further development to evaluate children's performance more precisely to determine their next steps in learning. Resources are of a good quality and the external equipment kept in a safe condition. Links with parents and carers are good with an open door policy and home visits when necessary. Children take their work home and parents are offered workshops that provide effective support to help their children to continue learning outside the setting. Leadership and management of the setting are good. The leader is knowledgeable and well informed about current practice and curriculum development.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

An above-average proportion of parents and carers submitted a response to the questionnaires. Of those, the overwhelming majority are happy with the education the school provides. A very small minority of parents and carers believe the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors consider pupils' behaviour to be good and judge that, on the rare occasions behaviour falls below that expected, appropriate and effective measures are taken to address the issue.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Overton St Helen'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 79 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 167 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	51	65	26	33	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	59	75	17	22	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	42	53	34	43	3	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	52	36	46	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	45	57	32	41	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	43	54	32	41	4	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	55	70	24	30	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)	35	44	34	43	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	52	35	44	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	37	36	46	7	9	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	39	38	48	5	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	46	58	31	39	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	55	70	22	28	1	1	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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 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.



18 November 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Overton St Helen's Church of England Primary School,
Morecambe, LA3 3EZ**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. A big 'thank you' to those of you who spoke with us in meetings, during lessons and at lunchtime. Your school provides you with a satisfactory standard of education. We were pleased to see how well you behave. You told us you feel safe, secure and well cared for by the teachers and the other adults who look after you. You obviously enjoy coming to school as shown by your high attendance. We think those of you that attend Reception make a good start to your education.

We want your school to be even better and we have asked your headteacher, the governors and other teachers to do more to help you get the best out of your time at school. We have asked them to make sure there is even more good teaching. This will help you achieve better by the time you leave. Also, when teachers mark your work, we ask that you are given more information on how to improve and that when you are asked to correct something, you go back to the work and teachers re-mark it. And finally, we would like the methods teachers use to understand how well you are doing in English to be applied in the same way in mathematics, and that in every lesson you are provided with work that challenges you all to do your best.

You can help your teachers achieve these improvements by letting them know when you find work too easy or too difficult and continuing to work as hard as you can in lessons.

Thank you again for making us so welcome and I wish you all the best for the future

Yours sincerely

Peter Cox
Lead inspector

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