

# Darwen St James' Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119457
<b>Local authority</b>	Blackburn with Darwen
<b>Inspection number</b>	379807
<b>Inspection dates</b>	6–7 December 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Robert Pye

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	146
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Terry Dyer
<b>Headteacher</b>	Maggie Beck
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 January 2009
<b>School address</b>	St James Crescent Darwen BB3 0EY
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed nine lessons or part-lessons, taught by eight teachers. They held meetings with pupils, teachers, support staff and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at school development planning, documentation recording the progress of pupils and samples of pupils' workbooks. Inspectors also analysed 38 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 17 completed by staff and 68 returned by pupils in Key Stage 2.

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

- It evaluated pupils' current attainment and progress in English and mathematics, and whether it is improving quickly enough.
- It investigated how well assessment is used to target interventions and support learning in mathematics.
- It explored the effectiveness of the curriculum in developing speaking and listening skills.
- It determined the effectiveness of indoor and outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## Information about the school

St James' is a smaller than the average sized primary school. The large majority of pupils come from White British heritages and there are a few who speak English as an additional language. An above average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also above that normally found. The school has appointed a new headteacher since the previous inspection. It is a nationally accredited Healthy School.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate**

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

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

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

**2**

## Main findings

St James' is a good school. It provides a warm, stimulating and friendly setting, where enjoyment is seen as an important element in all its work. The quality of care, guidance and support pupils receive, often on an individual basis from teachers and teaching assistants, is outstanding and underpins the ethos of the school. This is supported by extremely effective partnerships with parents and carers, outside agencies and institutions. Pupils respond very positively, with consistently good behaviour. Parents and carers pay tribute to what the school does for the children through comments such as, 'Every day my child comes back from school beaming.'

The relatively new headteacher and other leaders have been the driving force behind the good improvement made since the last inspection. They have overseen a range of initiatives that have improved provision rapidly and accelerated achievement in all Key Stages. Children's skills on entry to reception are usually much lower than those typical for children of this age. Although provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall, and the indoor environment offers a good variety of activities, planning does not focus enough on the use of the outside to accelerate children's learning. Pupils make good progress through Key Stages 1 and 2. As a result, attainment has risen to broadly average in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Pupils say they feel extremely safe and indeed are ambassadors of safety, taking on roles such as class fire and safety representatives. Their wider roles extend into a variety of responsibilities in school, as prefects, play leaders and school councillors, for example. They make an exceptional contribution to the school and wider community through partnerships involving several very different schools. Community cohesion is, therefore, highly developed. Opportunities to enjoy singing, and to explore and reflect on values such as 'justice' and 'aspiration' make a significant contribution to their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is average because, although pupils enjoy coming to school, too much time is taken off school by a small minority of families.

The quality of teaching is mostly good, with warm relationships between pupils and adults. Assessment is used effectively, but, in a small minority of lessons, the pace of lessons is too slow to accelerate pupils' learning. Pupils' confidence in using information and communication technology (ICT) to support their learning is well-embedded. The good curriculum provides varied opportunities for enrichment, supporting pupils' creative and personal development, and it increasingly meets the academic needs of all pupils.

The effective use of the complementary skills of the senior management team is moving the school forward at a good rate. Self-evaluation is accurate. The school has established effective systems for checking pupils' progress in order to identify any possible underachievement. It has set high expectations for teaching that are increasingly being met. Based on all these factors, the school demonstrates a good capacity to sustain improvement and provides good value for money.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Raise pupils' attainment to at least above average by ensuring that the pace of all lessons is brisk enough to move pupils on more quickly with their learning.
- Improve attendance by seeking further ways to encourage the small minority of parents and carers, whose children miss school too often, to ensure that their children attend more regularly.
- Enhance provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by making the outdoor area more stimulating and using it fully to extend learning across the curriculum.

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

2
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Pupils are enthusiastic learners. At the start of lessons, they are keen to begin their activities. For example, having learnt about the volcano Katla, Year 6 pupils could not wait to discuss their journalistic news reports and apply their well-developed ICT skills. Pupils behave well, enjoy their activities and support each other willingly in their learning. Attainment is improving and is now consistently average by the end of Year 6. Progress across the school is, therefore, good and pupils of all groups are achieving well from their starting points. As a result of targeted support from a well-trained team of teaching assistants, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to be eligible for free school meals, make the same good progress as that of their peers. Moreover, pupils who speak English as an additional language are progressing exceptionally well from their starting points because of effective strategies used to encourage conversations by teaching assistants. Pupils are proud of their work which is neatly presented.

Pupils feel safe and comment, 'When we have a problem our teachers help us out as soon as possible.' Their contribution to the wider community is outstanding. Through a dedicated scheme, pupils participate in joint activities within the local area, such as discussing society and playing alongside each other. Older pupils look after younger ones on a regular basis and they are proud of their 'Buddy Bench' developed to ensure that everyone has a friend. Pupils talk accurately and confidently about how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Pupils have a strong sense of self-worth and reflect deeply and thoughtfully on their feelings in relation to first-hand experiences. Enjoyment is very evident. For example, Key Stage 1 pupils thoroughly enjoyed their singing and performing in the school's Christmas nativity play. With average attainment and attendance, pupils are satisfactorily placed for their future well-being.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

Teaching is mostly good and there are examples of outstanding practice across the school. In most lessons, teachers' questioning develops pupils' understanding and teachers have high expectations of what their pupils can do. In a Year 2 literacy lesson, for example, the teacher encouraged pupils to wear wolves' hats and this motivated them to offer detailed character descriptions. Assessment is used effectively by identifying the next steps in learning. However, in a very small minority of lessons, the pace of learning is too slow and pupils remain on each task for too long. There is sensitive support from teaching assistants. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully included in discussions and work is matched correctly to their needs. Good marking and feedback are used consistently to support the pupils' good progress.

The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' personal and academic development and is underpinned by a sense of enjoyment. It provides a wide range of exciting, first-hand experiences, which allow the pupils to learn and use new vocabulary that effectively extends their speaking and listening skills. The new approach to writing enables pupils to learn new punctuation and vocabulary each week. There are frequent opportunities for pupils to participate in enrichment and extra-curricular activities, including visits. Joint activities with other schools support their excellent understanding of other cultures. Pupils speak positively of the variety of after-school clubs, which are well-attended. ICT is used very effectively to support a wide range of learning opportunities.

The well-being of each pupil is at the heart of everything the school does and staff show the utmost commitment to caring for each individual. Targeted support for potentially vulnerable pupils plays an important role in fostering their learning and development. Excellent links with outside agencies ensure that extra assistance is available for individual pupils, if required. The school provides an exceptionally welcoming environment for pupils, parents and carers. Induction procedures are of high quality, enabling children entering the Reception class to settle down quickly to

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

their new surroundings. The school has a strict attendance policy which is rigorously applied and results in most pupils attending regularly. However, despite the school's continued and strenuous efforts, a small minority of pupils miss too many lessons during term time.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and managers are fully committed to the continuous development of provision. They identify the school's strengths and areas for development accurately. The leadership team has monitored the quality of teaching effectively and weaker aspects are being resolved. Leaders successfully coordinate changes, as is evidenced in pupils' improved attainment by the end of Key Stage 2. Staff share their ambitions and have worked hard to improve many aspects of the school's work and sustain the overall good outcomes achieved by pupils.

The effective governing body is supportive of the school and is successful in carrying out its responsibilities. It is active in evaluating the school's performance and influencing its development. Parents and carers have a high level of confidence in the school's leaders and the school's engagement with them is exemplary in a variety of ways. The school works most effectively with families facing potentially challenging circumstances. It has forged productive partnerships that make an outstanding contribution to aspects of pupils' learning. For example, the school helps lead the innovative 'Oracy' cluster which seeks to promote new ways to enhance pupils' speaking and listening skills.

Procedures to safeguard pupils are good and can be seen in practice across all areas of the school. Appropriate checks are carried out on all staff and visitors and training in safeguarding and child protection is of good quality. Risk assessments and policies reflect the school's drive to give children a secure environment. There is a good commitment to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils. For example, effective action to boost the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is having a positive impact, particularly in accelerating their progress in mathematics. The promotion of community cohesion is outstanding because it is based on a thorough understanding of the school's context. As a result, personal horizons are extended. Pupils frequently share experiences through effective partnerships, discussing aspects of citizenship such as respect and tolerance with five contrasting schools.

*These are the grades for the leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall, the Early Years Foundation Stage provides a satisfactory beginning to children’s education. Most children enter reception with knowledge, skills and understanding that are much lower than those typical for children of their age. Overall progress is satisfactory, although there are signs of improvement with more children now making faster progress. Children’s skills on entry to Year 1 remain below the expected level, especially in reading, writing and calculation. Teaching is satisfactory and some good practice was observed. Staff work well as a team and encourage children to be independent. The indoor classroom is being developed into a more imaginative learning environment that is starting to improve children’s enjoyment of learning. However, the outdoor area is not used as effectively and it fails to provide exciting activities that engage children’s interests and accelerate their learning. Children who need additional help with learning or their behaviour are identified early and supported effectively. The partnership with parents and carers is excellent. Parents and carers are positive about the care their children receive and the good relationships between staff and children. As a result, children settle well and are happy, and feel safe within the established routines and knowing what is expected of them. Although a permanent leader has only recently been appointed the provision is satisfactorily led and managed. It ensures that children’s welfare and safety are maintained and the environment in which children play and learn is safe.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

## Views of parents and carers

The inspection questionnaire response rate, at around 20%, is below the average found in primary schools. Almost all parents and carers who returned the questionnaire expressed the view that their children enjoy school and that the school



keeps them safe. In addition, a vast majority is entirely happy with their children's experiences at the school. Speaking for many, one parent commented, 'Teachers are helpful and have been tremendously supportive.' A very small minority is of the opinion that the school does not take their suggestions and concerns into account. Inspectors considered that aspect, but found that school makes much effort to listen and act upon the views of parents and carers.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Darwen St James' 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 inspector received 38 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 146 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	79	7	18	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	31	82	7	18	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	76	9	24	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	82	7	18	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	28	74	9	24	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	68	11	29	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	68	9	24	1	3	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)	24	63	10	26	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	71	10	26	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	58	14	37	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	79	6	16	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	76	8	21	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	76	9	24	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	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 is 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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



8 December 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Darwen St James' Church of England Primary School,  
Darwen BB3 0EY**

Thank you all for your warm welcome when the inspection team visited your school recently. You were very polite and kind to us. We are particularly grateful to those of you who came to talk to some of us on Tuesday lunchtime. We were impressed with your good behaviour and the way you support each other confidently in class.

St James' is a good school. You are right to be proud of it. You are making good progress in your lessons and most of you enjoy learning. By the time you leave school at the end of Year 6, your attainment is broadly average. You have an excellent knowledge on how to stay safe. The adults who work with you care for and look after you extremely well. In turn, you look after younger children very well, too, and accept such a wide range of responsibilities to help run the school. You are not afraid to give visitors advice on how to stay healthy! You make an outstanding contribution to the wider community, which is helped by your good behaviour and your excellent appreciation of other cultures.

Your headteacher and all the other staff are very proud of you and they are always looking for ways to make the school even better. We would like to help them with this, so we have asked your teachers to help you make even faster progress by making sure that at all times all your teachers move lessons on more quickly to help you progress at a faster pace. We have also asked your school to find ways to help a small minority of you to attend more regularly. For the younger children in the Early Years Foundation Stage we would like your teachers to think of more exciting ways to help you learn when you are outside.

Thank you again for your kindness to us. Please keep working hard and looking after each other.

Yours sincerely

Robert Pye  
Lead Inspector

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