

Church, St Nicholas Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119447
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	379805
Inspection dates	25–26 April 2012
Lead inspector	Melvyn Hemmings

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	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neville Ashton
Headteacher	Jacqueline Gilbert
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Melvyn Hemmings
Mary Lanovy-Taylor

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 20 lessons or parts of lessons taught by seven teachers. Discussions were held with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at school documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, records of meetings of the governing body, assessment information and curriculum planning. Work in pupils' books and displays around the school were examined. Questionnaires from staff, pupils and from 51 parents and carers were scrutinised.

Information about the school

Church, St Nicholas is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average, including those supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The school meets the current government floor standards, which set minimum expectations for attainment and progress. It has gained a number of national awards, including the Activemark, and holds Healthy School 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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- Church, St Nicholas is a good school. Its main strengths are the strong teamwork of the senior leadership team in driving improvement, high staff morale, pupils' achievement and their behaviour. It is not yet outstanding because there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and not all subject leaders are fully involved in checking how effectively pupils learn through the school.
- Pupils' attainment is average by the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics because they make good progress and achieve well from their starting points on entering school.
- Teaching is mainly good with examples of outstanding practice. In all classrooms, there is a calm and friendly atmosphere that is beneficial to learning. There is some variation in the level of challenge for more-able pupils, the quality of marking and in opportunities for pupils to work independently and assess for themselves what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils behave well and this contributes positively to the progress they make. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe and act responsibly in and around school. Their attendance is above average.
- The headteacher's astute leadership has been central to the school maintaining and building upon its good performance at the last inspection. Her clear educational direction has strengthened the senior management team and significantly improved the way pupils' progress is checked and the involvement of the governing body in moving the school forward. The leadership of teaching and management of performance by senior leaders have led to improvement in the quality of teaching, particularly in developing pupils' reading skills. However, apart from in English and mathematics, subject leaders are not fully involved in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning throughout the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding by:
 - ensuring that more-able pupils are always challenged effectively
 - making sure that teachers use marking consistently to guide pupils to their next steps in learning
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to explore ideas for themselves and to assess how they might improve.
- Ensure all subject leaders are fully involved in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning throughout the school.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' attainment on entering school is well below that expected, particularly in language and communication skills and in their social development. They make good progress and achieve well throughout the school. As a result, their attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 is average. Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. They effectively develop their social skills, working and playing happily together, taking turns and sharing fairly in pairs and small groups. They gain confidence in exploring the world around them and in making choices for themselves. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils are interested in their work and keen to do well. They collaborate enthusiastically to complete tasks, such as when groups in Year 5 used role-play to create a freeze-frame of a video they had watched as part of their work in English.

Though attainment in reading is below average by the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have achieved well from their low starting points. Good quality professional development has improved staff confidence and skills in teaching phonics over the last year, so that pupils are more adept at linking letters and sounds. As a result, the numbers of pupils working at expected levels are increasing quickly. This was seen to good effect when a group of children in Reception made good progress in identifying and saying correctly words that contained 'ee' and 'or', such as 'week' and 'for'. Pupils in Key Stage 2 build effectively on these basic skills and by the time they leave school their attainment in reading is average. Pupils write confidently in a variety of styles, including poetry, to communicate their ideas. They take pride in their work and try their best to ensure their handwriting is neat. Pupils' mathematical calculation skills are secure and they can apply them competently to solve problems in real-life situations.

In their questionnaires, most parents and carers agreed that their children are making good progress. The particular needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are identified early and extra support provided to ensure they are met. As a result, they make the same good progress as other pupils. There is no noticeable variation between the performance of different groups. Of particular note is the way leaders have worked successfully to narrow the gap significantly in attainment between boys and girls, particularly in reading and writing, so that now boys are doing as well as girls.

Quality of teaching

Pupils say they enjoy their learning because lessons are fun. Teachers plan carefully to build upon previous experiences and to provide activities that capture and maintain pupils' interest. These activities are usually matched to the ability of different groups. At times the level of challenge for more-able pupils does not extend them sufficiently and limits their progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are able to ask relevant questions to check out pupils' understanding of the ideas being taught. Marking is used well in English and mathematics to guide pupils to their next steps in learning. It is not used as effectively in other subjects. Teachers and teaching assistants work successfully as a team to promote learning. As a result, lessons have a brisk pace and ongoing assessment is used well to deal with any misconceptions that may arise. There are inconsistencies between classes in the opportunities provided for pupils to work independently and decide for themselves what they need to do in order to improve. At times lessons are too teacher directed and do not encourage pupils to explore ideas for themselves.

In the best lessons, teachers provide activities that are highly motivating, extremely challenging for all groups and successful in ensuring that pupils think for themselves. Good examples of this were seen in mathematics lessons for pupils in Years 5 and 6, in which they made excellent progress in solving problems involving ratio and proportion and in exploring general statements involving numbers to see if they were true or false.

Good quality professional development has improved the teaching of reading and this is now good throughout the school. The needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are met well through a variety of intervention programmes. Teaching assistants play an important role in ensuring these are successful. Teaching promotes pupils' personal and social development well through opportunities to share ideas during work in groups and in discussion with a partner. Teachers' high expectation of pupils' behaviour effectively supports their moral development. Most parents and carers agreed in their questionnaires that their children are taught well.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They relate well to staff and other pupils, ensuring that the school is harmonious and friendly. One pupil's comment, which is typical of others, captured this atmosphere: 'We like coming to school because everyone is friendly and we all help each other.' Pupils behave well and act responsibly in lessons and around the school. They follow teachers' directions promptly and cooperate well with each other. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes contribute positively to the progress they make. Most parents, carers and staff say that behaviour is good and has been over time. A few pupils have behavioural difficulties and find it hard to control their emotions at times. Staff manage these situations well to minimise any disruption to learning and ensure that lessons run smoothly. Behaviour management is consistent through the school. Pupils have a good understanding about the different types of bullying. They can explain the difference between racist, physical, emotional and cyber bullying. Pupils say any such behaviour is very rare and is dealt with quickly by staff should it occur.

Pupils play an active role in the life of the school by taking on responsibilities, such as being a house captain or school councillor. They carry out these roles diligently and, in so doing, give all pupils a voice in suggesting how the school might improve. Attendance is above average and pupils are punctual in arriving at school. Pupils have a good understanding of

how to keep themselves and other safe, and parents and carers agree that their children are safe. Pupils talked knowledgeably about issues involving road, water and internet safety and what to do if approached by a stranger. The curriculum is planned carefully to promote this understanding.

Leadership and management

Senior leaders have an ambitious vision for school improvement that is shared by all staff and the governing body. It is based upon high expectation of all staff and pupils and a continuous drive to take the school forward. Performance management effectively supports and improves teaching, channelling the efforts of staff to good effect. Planning for improvement is based upon robust evidence gathered from accurate self-evaluation. This enables key priorities to be set and carefully monitored. A good example of this is the way professional development was provided to improve the teaching of phonics when pupils' reading, especially in Key Stage 1, was identified as a weakness. As a result, progress in reading is accelerating. Subject leaders in English and mathematics effectively monitor and evaluate teaching and learning through the school. Leaders of other subjects are not as involved in such activities and do not have a clear picture of outcomes in their subjects. The role of the governing body has been developed so they are effective in promoting school improvement. Governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective and meet requirements, so that staff and pupils are safe at all times in school. The school's track record since the previous inspection shows there is strong capacity for further improvement.

Leaders promote equality and tackle discrimination well. The tracking of the performance of different groups has been much improved since the last inspection. It enabled leaders to identify a wide gap in the achievement of boys and girls in reading, particularly in Key Stage 1. Girls were doing much better than boys. Action was taken and this has proved successful in rapidly narrowing the gap. There is now minimal difference between the achievement of different groups. The school has developed close links with high schools and a local academy that has enhanced pupils' learning in science, sport and reading. Leaders have improved the engagement of parents and carers in their children's learning and are working hard to develop it further.

The curriculum meets the needs and interest of pupils successfully. They say they particularly enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular activities and visits to places such as Chester Zoo and Liverpool Albert Docks. These activities effectively promote pupils' social development. Their cultural development is enhanced by the links with a Jewish school in Bury and a visit to a Hindu Temple in Preston.

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.



27 April 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Church, St Nicholas Church of England Primary School, Accrington, BB5 4DT

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave the team when we inspected your school. We enjoyed meeting you, finding out about your views and seeing the many interesting things you do.

The inspectors judge that yours is a good school and that:

- you make good progress and attain average standards by the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics
- teaching is good and you feel safe in school, as indicated in your questionnaires
- you behave well and are keen to learn
- the curriculum is enriched by a variety of extracurricular activities and educational visits, such as to Chester Zoo
- you enjoy school, as shown by your above average attendance and punctuality
- staff and governors are working hard to help you do even better.

To become even better we have asked your school to:

- make teaching consistent, such as by ensuring pupils who find work easy are always made to think hard, providing more opportunities for you to find things out for yourselves and make sure marking is used consistently to show you how to improve
- make sure all teachers who lead subjects are fully involved in checking the quality of teaching and learning.

All of you are a credit to your school and can help it improve further by continuing to try your best in your activities.

Yours sincerely

Melvyn Hemmings
Lead Inspector

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