

Quernmore Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119378
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	395482
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2012
Lead inspector	David Byrne

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

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	101
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Whitaker
Headteacher	Sarah Baines
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

David Byrne

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed four teachers teaching six lessons, two of which were jointly observed with the acting headteacher. In addition, time was spent talking with pupils, sharing their work, hearing them read and gathering their opinions and views of the school. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, all staff and a local authority representative. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation, documents related to safeguarding and samples of the pupils' work. The responses from 72 parental and carers' questionnaires were evaluated as well as those from staff and pupils.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized primary school. No pupil is known to be eligible for free school meals. The vast majority of pupils is of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils supported by School Action Plus or with a statement of special educational need is below average. The school meets the government's current floor standard, the minimum standards set for attainment and progress.

The school has gained the accreditation for Investors in People and achieved three green flags for its commitment to environmental action.

Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has taken up post and one new teacher has been appointed. During the inspection, the school was led by the deputy headteacher owing to the maternity leave of the headteacher.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key Findings

- This is an outstanding school. It prepares pupils very well for life by providing an excellent, well-rounded education. The curriculum is exceptional; it inspires pupils to learn and promotes excellent academic and personal skills. The curriculum contributes extremely well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils grow into confident, articulate and independent young people.
- Achievement is outstanding. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is well above that expected for their age in literacy and numeracy and strengths are evident in the humanities and aspects of visual and performing arts. Progress for all year groups, including those pupils with special educational needs, is rapid year on year.
- This excellent progress is the result of outstanding teaching. High expectations and very imaginative teaching strategies lead to high levels of pupils' engagement. Every pupil is known and understood; staff and pupils work together in assessing and evaluating individual progress so that steps for improvement are pinpointed and responded to.
- The large majority of parents and carers is extremely pleased with the school. However, a few are concerned about whether or not the school deals effectively with aspects of behaviour and if sufficient focus is given to mathematics and literacy. Behaviour and safety is outstanding; pupils are polite, courteous and very caring. Literacy and numeracy are given a good focus in the curriculum which leads to the well above average outcomes. The school is aware of the need to improve aspects of its communication to alleviate concerns.
- School leaders, including the governing body, have a clear vision for the school's development and ensure high quality of teaching by the judicious management of performance. A strong, cohesive staff team drives the school forward; it embraces new ideas and strategies and ensures that there is no complacency.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine strategies for communicating to parents and carers about the way behaviour is managed, and how the curriculum effectively promotes literacy and numeracy.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is excellent. Parents and carers are accurate in their views about the progress their children make. From starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage that are typical for children of their age, attainment rises rapidly. In their time in school, pupils' progress exceeds national expectations: by the end of both Years 2 and 6 attainment in English and mathematics is typically well above average. In 2011 attainment at Year 6 was average owing to the nature of the cohort in this small school. However, school records show that this cohort made excellent progress from their starting points. Data held by the school indicate that 2012 signals a return to well above average attainment. Boys and girls make similar progress and if gaps appear, for example as happened in the progress of girls in mathematics, swift action is taken to close them. Pupils with special educational needs receive high-quality support, which ensures that they, too, make rapid progress.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, pupils develop a good understanding of how to link letters and sounds (phonics). This knowledge impacts positively on their attainment in reading and writing. Pupils read confidently, fluently and with enjoyment. The well-stocked school library is used frequently by pupils, and many love using books to seek information related to their class themes. These factors, coupled with good support at home, contribute to above average standards in reading at the end of Year 2 and well above average standards at the end of Year 6.

The well above average academic outcomes results from staff recognising and responding to the individuality of each pupil. Many pupils have an advanced curiosity in the world around them, speak articulately and gain great satisfaction by learning new skills and widening their knowledge. Pupils acquire a strong foundation in subjects other than English and mathematics. There are many examples throughout the school of pupils producing good-quality work in art, developing a good understanding of music and acquiring the confidence to perform in front of an audience. Many are fascinated by history; pupils in Years 3 and 4 talk with enormous enthusiasm about the way the Vikings lived and in Years 1 and 2 pupils are exceptionally well-informed about dinosaurs and the significance of fossils. The pupils' understanding of the environment and issues related to this is exceptional. Their breadth of knowledge, coupled with advanced skills of researching independently and communicating findings in a variety of ways contribute to them being extremely well-prepared for the next stage in their education.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is outstanding because lessons are skilfully planned to capture the pupils' imaginations, make learning relevant to their lives and generate an enthusiasm to investigate. Throughout the school, staff apply the philosophy that pupils learn best when they are actively involved. The curriculum is creatively interpreted to achieve this involvement. This enables pupils to apply their skills of literacy and numeracy to a host of different situations. From the earliest age in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are encouraged to make choices and benefit from using excellent outdoor facilities. Some Reception children explored their woodland and play area to locate 'hidden' eggs with numbers up to ten and then placed them in the correct sequence.

In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils are encouraged to pose questions related to the class theme and then to seek answers. In so doing, they develop their skills of extracting information from books and the Internet, exploring ideas through discussion with class mates and applying a variety of essential skills to record and communicate their findings. The pupils' excellent progress is underpinned by teachers' excellent use of assessment. This enables them to structure tasks skilfully that challenge pupils just at the right level. A very good balance is struck between pupils learning independently as part of structured group activities and learning in more formal, adult-led activities. An outstanding lesson for a Years 3/4 lesson resulted in pupils being engrossed in their Viking topic. Working independently, pupils worked in groups on a range of very skilfully planned activities. Some explored features of Viking boats, others applied mathematics skills to design a Viking village and others extended their knowledge of techniques of creating sentences. Focused teaching was observed in a good lesson in Years 5/6. Here, pupils responded to a well-structured lesson that enabled them to apply their knowledge of writing recounts. These were linked to their visit to Gawthorpe Hall to gather knowledge about the Pendle Witches. Marking of pupils' work is consistently of good quality and shows them how to improve.

Good systems are in place to identify any pupils who learn more slowly than others. Effective partnerships with parents and carers and also with outside agencies support those with special educational needs. Teaching assistants are deployed in a variety of roles so that all pupils benefit from their skilled support. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and ensure that they have a clear understanding of right and wrong.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The large majority of parents and carers indicated in their questionnaire responses that their children feel safe at school. This is indeed the case. Pupils have a mature understanding of how to live and act safely. They understand the importance of eating healthily and taking regular exercise. Such advanced levels of self-awareness benefit pupils' learning, as well as their happiness in school. The pupils' high level of enjoyment is reflected in the consistently above average attainment.

The school's records indicate that incidences of bullying of any type are extremely rare. A few pupils, however, say that at times behaviour could be better. The inspector followed up their concerns and found that the concerns referred to low-level disagreements between individuals and these occur very occasionally. Pupils are

adamant that acts of aggression or malicious behaviour are virtually unknown. Pupils are respectful of others with different beliefs, backgrounds and lifestyle choices, they say that racism or sexism of any form between pupils is non-existent.

Pupils are typically well-mannered and thoughtful. They willingly help others and take on responsibilities such as acting as school councillors, reading with younger pupils and in raising funds to help less fortunate people. Pupils' personal development benefits from exceptionally high-quality outdoor facilities. These include the school's own wind generator, a large secure pond area, areas of woodland, natural grass and shrub area and high-quality deep beds. The access to such facilities supports all areas of learning. These unusual, extra resources have contributed to pupils becoming enthusiastic advocates of taking action to save the planet by promoting sustainable living. They are keen to recycle and reuse materials, save energy and protect and improve the natural environment.

Leadership and management

The school is led exceptionally well by the headteacher and her deputy. An indication of this successful management is that even when the headteacher is not present, as has been the case since November, the school moves forward and continues to develop. Priorities for improvement are based on accurate self-evaluation and effective systems for regularly monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. A key factor in the school's success is the relentless drive and commitment of all staff to improve. Professional development is very effectively managed by the headteacher; she has generated a culture within the staff that there is always something to learn. The governing body provides high levels of expertise, challenge and support for the school and for the headteacher. It ensures that safeguarding policies and procedures meet requirements and keep pupils, staff and visitors safe and secure. The school is constantly moving forward and is effective in securing many additional resources to add to the provision for pupils. Given the current circumstances, the school is very well placed to improve further in future.

All pupils have equally excellent opportunities to succeed and take part in a wide variety of enrichment programmes. The performance of pupils is carefully checked to keep an eye on each individual's progress. Intervention programmes are provided if anyone is at risk of falling behind. Learning is enriched by a broad and balanced curriculum. Very effective links are made between the different subjects. Pupils respond well to high expectations for them to take responsibility for their learning. Their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported exceptionally well by the wide range of opportunities to develop their skills in music and the arts, acquire an understanding of French and engage with the natural environment. Pupils benefit from many educational visits to support learning including a residential experience. Generally, productive partnerships exist with parents and carers which contribute to the pupils' excellent progress. However, communications to explain how the curriculum supports learning in literacy and numeracy and the way that behaviour is managed are not yet effective enough. This has led to some parents and carers having concerns.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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 up 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.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
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.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
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.



14 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Quernmore Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Lancaster, LA2 9EL

It was a privilege to join you in your school for two days. Thank you for sharing with me your thoughts about the school, showing me your work and welcoming me to lessons and at your lunch table. You are clearly proud of your school and you have every reason to be. It is outstanding. This means that it is doing all it can to set you on your way with advanced skills both academically and personally.

Lessons are fun but also challenging. Your teachers and support staff give you lots of hands-on, practical experiences. These are very well planned to make you think and enable you all to take part in your learning. Teachers respect your ideas and share their thoughts about your work with you. You understand how well you are achieving and what you need to do to get even better.

You all behave with respect and have a great awareness of others. You naturally help out and like to take responsibility for aspects of school life. Your understanding of the need to protect our fragile Earth is very impressive. You are so lucky to have such amazing school grounds to help you to learn about such things. Nothing, as good as your school, happens by accident. It is because of the skill and hard work of all the staff. The headteacher and deputy give excellent leadership and the governors play their part as well. Your school is constantly striving to improve.

Part of my job is to suggest ways that the school can do this. I have suggested better communication with your families to alleviate some concerns expressed in the parents' and carers' questionnaires. The school needs to explain that the curriculum includes plenty of literacy and numeracy, and also to show how well-behaved you all are.

Yours sincerely,

David Byrne
Lead Inspector

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