

Banks Methodist School

Chapel Lane, Banks, Southport, Merseyside, PR9 8EY

Inspection dates

18 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- Too few pupils make better than expected progress in their learning. In mathematics, pupils do not achieve well because they cannot confidently solve problems. At Key Stage 2, pupils do not write at sufficient length.
- Behaviour requires improvement because during lessons some pupils lose interest and then sometimes distract others from their learning.
- Teaching requires improvement because too little is good or outstanding and not enough is expected of pupils.
- Teaching is not effective in meeting pupils' different needs. There is not enough challenge, particularly for the most able. Pupils with special educational needs sometimes find work too difficult. The marking of pupils' work does not consistently help them to improve.
- The school's performance has declined since the last inspection. Leadership and management require improvement because subject leaders have too little impact on improving teaching. Governors do not have a secure grasp of how well the school is doing or of the quality of teaching.

The school has the following strengths

- The newly appointed headteacher has brought clear vision, is robustly tackling weaknesses in teaching and has gained the confidence of staff and parents.
- Methods for checking on the quality of teaching are now effective. There is a good training programme to improve teaching.
- Pupils are kept safe in school and say they feel safe. Adults look after them well.
- The headteacher and teachers have an accurate view of what needs to improve. Teachers are held to account for pupils' progress and are keen to improve.
- Leaders' actions are beginning to have an impact. For example, attendance is improving and pupils are developing their reading skills well. This shows the school has the capacity to return to its previous level of performance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed significant parts of six lessons. One lesson was observed jointly with the headteacher. Altogether, three teachers were observed and teaching was seen in all classes. Inspectors looked at pupils' books to gain evidence about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress over time; some of this was carried out with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to them about their progress in reading and what they like about it.
- Meetings were held with two governors, the headteacher, middle leaders, a representative of the local authority and with teachers. Informal meetings were held with groups of pupils.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentary evidence including records of pupils' progress, the school development plan and records of governing body meetings. Inspectors also considered a number of policies including those for child protection and behaviour.
- Inspectors checked for responses to the Ofsted on-line questionnaire for parents (Parent View) but there were too few to trigger any information. They spoke to a number of parents as they brought their children to school.

Inspection team

David Law, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jane Holmes

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Banks Methodist is a much smaller than average-sized primary school with two classes.
- There are no pupils from minority ethnic groups and none who have a first language other than English.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are supported at school action because they are disabled or have special educational needs and an above-average proportion have a statement of special educational needs or are supported at school action plus.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority.
- There have been significant changes to staff since the last inspection. The current headteacher started in January 2014. Of the three teaching staff, two are recently appointed. There have been a number of recent appointments to teaching assistant posts.
- The government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6, do not apply because of very small numbers in each year group.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all groups of pupils achieve as well as they can by:
 - expecting more of all pupils and challenging them to achieve their best
 - making sure pupils' diverse needs are always met, particularly so that the most able are stretched and reach higher levels and those with special educational needs have the appropriate support and learn successfully
 - making sure the marking of pupils' work helps them to understand what they must do to improve.
- Improve behaviour in lessons by helping all pupils to acquire consistently positive attitudes to learning so they show greater interest, concentrate better, become more productive and make better progress.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - building teachers' leadership skills so they can successfully contribute to the leadership of subjects and aspects of the school's work, particularly so they are able to improve the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress
 - ensuring that governors are better informed about how good teaching is and how well different groups are getting on compared with each other and nationally, in order to be able to challenge the school's performance robustly.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Given their starting points, too few pupils make better than expected progress. Achievement requires improvement because current school data and work in pupils' books shows that they do not always make as much progress as they should, particularly the most able. The rate of learning is not sufficiently brisk, so over time pupils are not fully productive and do not gain the skills, knowledge and understanding they should in as much depth as they might.
- Achievement has declined since the last inspection at Key Stage 1 and in 2013, by the end of Year 2, pupils' standards of attainment were below average in reading and writing. This is set to improve this year because all pupils are likely to reach expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics but none are on course to reach better than expected levels. There is a similar picture across Key Stage 2 where most make expected progress but few make better than expected progress and this is particularly acute in mathematics.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics requires improvement because too many find difficulty in solving problems, for example, when working with fractions. School leaders recognise this and some improvement has been made, for example, Year 2 pupils were able to recall key number facts because the teacher diagnosed the difficulties and gave good support.
- Pupils are improving their ability to use letters and sounds in Key Stage 1 and more are reaching the expected level in this key reading skill but, despite this, few are on track to reach the higher level in reading by the end of Year 2. Overall, pupils make better progress in reading and writing than they do in mathematics at Key Stage 2 and school data and other inspection evidence show pupils' reading skills in Year 6 are improving. However, improvement is still required in English overall at Key Stage 2 because pupils' books show their writing is not always of sufficient length.
- In some lessons, work does not challenge the most able pupils and their progress slows. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do not make enough progress because work is not pitched at the right level and they find things too difficult.
- Pupil premium funding is having a positive impact on achievement for pupils in receipt of free school meals. The gap in attainment between this group and other pupils at the school not eligible for free school meals has narrowed and the latest data shows no difference between the two groups. Pupils in receipt of free school meals usually attain as well as similar pupils nationally.
- The headteacher and teachers work hard to foster good relations, tackle discrimination and provide equal opportunity for all groups to learn and this is starting to help achievement improve, albeit less so for the most able and some pupils with special educational needs.
- Although achievement requires improvement, it is not inadequate. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills, knowledge and understanding below those typically seen for their age and make good progress in their personal development. The headteacher and staff are working to build on this positive start and are achieving some success, for example, in improving pupils' reading and writing skills and supporting those in receipt of the pupil premium.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching over time has not been good enough to bring about good achievement. Pupils make only expected progress because too little is expected of them. Teaching staff absence and the departure of some key staff since the last inspection has held back improvement.
- Work is not always pitched at the correct level. The most able are not stretched enough because they are not fully challenged. Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs make too little progress when work is too difficult so they begin to lose interest and give up.
- The marking of pupils' work is occasionally good but too often not effective enough in showing pupils what they need to do to improve. For example, some marking consists of brief comments

that pupils do not find helpful.

- Relationships are positive in all classes. Pupils say their teachers are kind and look after them well. Pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to work together and this successfully supports their social development. For example, pupils in Key Stage 1 thoroughly enjoyed the games they played together during sporting activities on the playground.
- Pupils learn to read with reasonable fluency and accuracy at Key Stage 1 because they are supported effectively in learning to use letters and sounds to help them understand. In Year 2, pupils learn to write at greater length and some show good progress in using punctuation. At Key Stage 2, pupils read often enough but not enough is expected of them when they have to write and they produce too little work of good quality.
- Learning in mathematics at Key Stage 1 is sometimes good, for example, when pupils successfully identified multiples of 2 and 5 and the teacher intervened skilfully to clear up some misconceptions. However, pupils are not learning mathematics quickly enough, especially at Key Stage 2, because they are not helped to be adept at solving problems.
- Sometimes pupils show an eagerness to learn, for example, when they benefit from specialist knowledge in sports lessons, but sometimes activities in lessons do not engage them. Consequently, over time some pupils complete too little work and this limits their persistence and tenacity as learners.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. In lessons, although pupils often listen carefully and try to follow instructions, teaching does not always involve them well enough and then they lose interest. When this happens, learning slows and there is some minor low-level disruption, with some pupils distracting others. Some pupils lack tenacity in their learning and sometimes give up too easily.
- Around school, pupils are polite and want to be helpful. They like to take responsibility, for example, by being members of the school council. The school is calm and orderly at playtimes and lunchtimes.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel very safe in school. They like the recent changes to how they have to come into school in the morning because they feel this keeps them safe. Parents said they thought arrangements for keeping pupils safe had improved since the new headteacher was appointed.
- Bullying is rare and pupils say they feel free of any harassment. The school has suitable methods to deal with bullying should it arise. Overall, pupils have an appropriate understanding of what bullying is, but some do not fully understand the different types of bullying or how they might respond to it.
- Attendance for the last school year improved to average. It was well-above average last term. Pupils get into lessons promptly after playtimes and at the start of the day.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement and are not yet good because subject leadership is not successfully established and able to drive improvements in teaching. Also, governors are not able to provide appropriate challenge and support because they have an inaccurate and too positive a view of the school's performance. In addition, the positive actions implemented to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement have yet to raise them both to good.
- The newly appointed headteacher gives clear leadership, putting a sharp focus on improving teaching to quicken pupils' progress. Her clear vision of what needs to be done is communicated clearly to staff, governors, parents and children. Staff accept the need to improve and work together as a team. However, currently too much depends on the headteacher because many middle leaders are new to post and have yet to have an impact on the school's improvement.

- The headteacher has successfully led an accurate review of how effective the school is and this has identified relevant priorities for improvement. These are clearly set out in the improvement plan and agreement has been reached on what actions are needed. Clear milestones have been set for when expected improvements will be realised and all staff are working steadily and successfully towards these objectives.
- There are suitable methods for checking on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. The appraisal of teachers' work is securely established and pay awards are made on merit. There is a good training programme to improve teaching and visits have already been made to other schools to learn from their success. The impact of these initiatives is already being seen in the better teaching, for example, the establishment of methods to successfully teach letters and sounds (phonics), and improving achievement as a result of more accurate checks on pupils' progress.
- Leaders and governors are keen for pupils to experience an exciting and enjoyable education. For example, pupils enjoy activities such as visits to the coast to study conservation, learning to play brass instruments and joining in 'reading challenge'.
- The primary school sport funding has been used successfully to increase participation, for example, through providing extra swimming lessons. Leaders and governors can show some success in the use of pupil premium funding because the gap between pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those not eligible has closed in the last two years.
- The headteacher and governors value the support of the local authority, particularly that of the school adviser. This has had a positive impact, for example, by helping to appoint the headteacher, supporting her evaluation of teaching and pupils' progress and enabling links with other schools. However, the school is not too dependent on this support.
- Leaders are keen to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and achieve this successfully through, for example, visits to worship in the chapel, raising money for charity and participation in community events.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are committed to the school but think it is doing better than it really is. They accept the priorities for improvement presented by the headteacher but have not contributed significantly to formulating them. Although keen to be supportive, governors are not successfully challenging school leaders because they know too little about the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' achievement, including that of pupils supported by the pupil premium. This restricts their ability to tackle any underperformance. Governors ensure safeguarding requirements are met. Financial management is prudent.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	119405
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	440841

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Almond
Headteacher	Christine Adams
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2011
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