

Church, St Nicholas Church of England Primary School

St Nicholas Road, Dill Hall Lane, Church, Accrington, BB5 4DN

Inspection dates 20–21 January 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- Pupils do not make consistently good progress in all classes and subjects, because the quality of teaching is not consistently good.
- Pupils do less well in writing and mathematics than they do in reading. They do not have enough exciting opportunities in real-life contexts to deepen their mathematical understanding, nor to write imaginatively in a range of styles.
- Pupils of different abilities are not always given work that is matched well to what they already know and can do. Tasks do not always sustain their interest or challenge them effectively.
- Teachers' marking does not consistently show pupils what they have done well and how to make their work better. Pupils do not always have regular opportunities to check, correct and improve their work.
- Displays in classrooms do not always help pupils to focus on the key skills that they are learning.
- A small minority of pupils do not behave well enough in lessons. Pupils are sometimes too boisterous when playing together.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher and other leaders are highly ambitious for the school. They have quickly and accurately identified what needs to be done. Their actions are already leading to rapid improvements in behaviour, teaching and achievement.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. They develop skills which prepare them well for their learning in Year 1.
- Highly skilled and experienced teaching assistants play a valuable role in supporting pupils' learning.
- Pupils feel safe and secure. Pupils are looked after well in this happy and caring school.
- Governors are involved in the life of the school and therefore know it well. They support and challenge senior leaders. The school is therefore well placed to improve further.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in all classes. They observed the teaching of early reading skills and listened to pupils reading. They observed teaching in small support groups. They looked at examples of pupils' work to gain a view of teaching over time.
- The inspectors held meetings with pupils, staff, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors spoke to parents informally before school and at a class assembly. They took account of 10 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View), the school's own surveys of parents' and pupils' views, and 21 questionnaires returned by staff.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school's most recent data on pupils' attainment and progress across the school, the school's own view of its effectiveness and its plans for improvement, and information relating to checks on the quality of teaching.
- The inspectors looked at arrangements for safeguarding pupils and at records relating to behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Christine Potter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Alastair Younger

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those eligible for the pupil premium, is well above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The Reception class provides full-time early years provision.
- In 2014, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There have been several changes to staff since the last inspection, including the appointment of a new headteacher and deputy headteacher in January 2014, following a period when there was an acting headteacher in post. There have also been changes to the governing body, including a new Chair of the Governing Body.
- The school provides a breakfast club for pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - always making sure that pupils of different abilities are given work that is matched to what they already know and can do, in order to sustain their interest and challenge them effectively
 - ensuring that teachers' marking consistently shows pupils exactly what they have done well and how to make their work better
 - always giving pupils time to check, correct and improve their work
 - making better use of displays to help pupils focus on the key skills they are learning.
- Improve achievement in writing and mathematics, by providing more exciting opportunities in real-life contexts, including planning activities in the school's outdoor area and the local environment, for pupils to deepen their mathematical understanding and to write imaginatively in a range of styles.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- When the headteacher took up the post in January 2014, she quickly identified that prompt action was needed to improve behaviour, teaching and achievement, all of which have declined since the last inspection. This has been due to changes to leadership and staffing, and inconsistent teaching and behaviour management that have not met the needs of individual pupils well enough.
- The headteacher provides strong leadership and is well supported by the deputy headteacher and other members of the newly established senior leadership team. They have taken decisive action which is already leading to rapid and ongoing improvements. They are ambitious for the school and are well aware that they have not yet had sufficient time to have a full impact so that teaching, pupils' progress and behaviour are not yet consistently good. They have clear plans, already partly successfully implemented, in place to achieve this.
- Leaders are currently receiving strong and effective support from the local authority's monitoring and intervention team. The adviser is working alongside leaders to plan specific strategies to develop and sustain the improvements which are taking place.
- Senior leaders have worked hard to build confidence and morale among staff. Staff now feel valued and that their contribution to the school matters. They are enthusiastic and committed to doing the best for the pupils in their care. Governors, staff, parents and pupils express confidence in the new headteacher and appreciate how much the school has improved during the past year.
- The headteacher has recognised the leadership potential of other staff. They have received the necessary training and subject leaders now play an effective role in checking pupils' progress in different subjects. They produce clear, workable action plans for their subjects which are being followed rigorously.
- Good systems are now in place for tracking individual pupils' progress. Regular meetings between leaders and teachers and closer scrutiny of pupils' work ensure that any pupils who are not doing as well as they should are quickly identified and given additional support. The effectiveness of this support is checked carefully to ensure that it is improving pupils' progress.
- The quality of teaching across the school is now improving because senior leaders carry out frequent checks, through watching lessons, looking at pupils' work and talking to pupils about their learning. Weaker teaching is tackled decisively and a lot of training and support is provided to help teachers improve their skills. Teachers are now being held accountable for how well pupils in their classes achieve because performance management targets are closely linked to the pupils' progress.
- Leaders make sure the pupil premium funding is spent on supporting eligible pupils so that gaps between their achievement and other pupils are closing. They also make sure that all pupils are able to join in all aspects of school life and encourage them to attend the breakfast club. This demonstrates the school's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- Leaders set high expectations for pupils' behaviour towards one another, whatever their background and needs. Pupils say that there is no racism within the school and know that this, or any other form of discrimination, will not be tolerated. Good relations are therefore fostered well, with most pupils showing a sensitive respect for others. This has been a key factor in the improvements to pupils' behaviour and in their effective preparation for life in modern Britain.
- The curriculum has a strong and appropriate focus on developing pupils' basic skills and positive attitudes to learning. The school has recognised that, in the past, boys have not always done as well as girls. Activities and topics are, therefore, planned to appeal to boys' interests and their achievement has improved. Pupils have good opportunities to reflect on their own experiences and the lives of others. There is an emphasis on developing moral values. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is therefore promoted well. The new outdoor area provides a wealth of potential opportunities, which are not yet used fully, for deepening pupils' mathematical understanding and developing their imaginative writing in real-life contexts.
- The school makes good use of the primary school sports funding. New equipment has been purchased and the sports coach works alongside teachers to develop their skills in teaching physical education. Pupils now enthusiastically take part in a wider range of different sports and local tournaments. The school has recently won a handball competition; its first sporting trophy for several years.
- The new senior leadership team is particularly keen to work with parents and involve them more fully in the life of the school. Assemblies and parents' evenings are increasingly well attended and parent questionnaires indicate that parents feel that staff are approachable and friendly.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors, several of whom are new to the role, are as ambitious for the school as the senior leaders

are. They 'want to make a difference'. They now feel that they are kept well informed about what is going on in school.

- Governors provide strong support and challenge, and ask searching questions to make sure that they understand the information that they are given about the school. They have received training on analysing the school's performance data. They are keeping a close watch on pupils' progress because they know that teaching and achievement need to continue to improve rapidly. They make sure that any decisions relating to teachers' pay increases are based firmly on them having achieved their performance management targets.
- Governors have a firm grasp on the school's finances and are particularly keen to ensure that the pupil premium funding is spent on improving outcomes for eligible pupils. They have also been committed to improving the school playground in a drive to improve behaviour. They are well aware of their statutory responsibilities and ensure that safeguarding requirements are fully met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- When the work in lessons is not well matched to pupils' needs and abilities, a small minority of pupils lose interest in what they should be doing and behave less well. Pupils are sometimes too boisterous and rough when they are playing together. This occasionally leads to them falling out with each other.
- Pupils say that behaviour has improved 'massively' over the past year. Pupils really appreciate the new systems that reward them for behaving well and value the weekly certificates for 'random acts of kindness'. Staff manage pupils' behaviour calmly and positively and there is an emphasis on helping pupils to manage their own feelings and behaviour.
- The school has improved playground facilities and appointed a sports coach, who provides a range of activities at break times. These have led to improved behaviour in the playground, and help pupils to settle and be ready to learn when they return to class. Pupils hold the sports coach in high regard and he also provides individual support for pupils who are having difficulty in managing their behaviour.
- The majority of pupils have positive attitudes towards learning, are keen to do well and discuss and share ideas to support each other's learning. Pupils' books show that most of them work hard and take pride in what they do. Pupils of all ages try hard to write neatly and to present their work well.
- Most pupils behave well around the school and get on well together. They were keen to hold doors open for the inspectors and greeted them warmly and politely. They relish the chance to take responsibility, such as being on door duty or cloakroom monitors. They feel that adults in school take account of their views, such as when they complete the pupils' questionnaires.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say that they feel absolutely safe in school and parents who spoke to inspectors or completed the online questionnaire agree that the school keeps their children safe. Pupils know that if they are upset or worried about anything at all, they can always talk to a member of staff.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what bullying is, and how to keep themselves safe, for example when using the internet or mobile phones. They know how important it is to tell a trusted adult if they feel they are being bullied. They say that bullying 'doesn't happen anymore' in school, and have absolute confidence in the staff to sort out any issues promptly and effectively.
- Staff in school know parents and their children well. There are strong partnerships with external agencies and the school provides valuable support to help keep pupils safe. Families where parents are finding it hard to get their children to school regularly and on time are supported particularly well. Attendance is therefore consistently close to, or slightly better than, average.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Work in pupils' books, the school's assessment information and records of checks carried out on teaching, all indicate that the quality of teaching over time is inconsistent and requires improvement.
- Pupils' work is not always matched closely enough to what they already know and can do, or to pupils' interests, in order to keep them focused on their work. While the most able pupils often receive work

which is more challenging, work does not challenge pupils of all abilities consistently well.

- Teachers' marking does not consistently show pupils exactly what they have done well and how to make their work better. Pupils do not have regular opportunities to check, correct and improve their work, either before they hand it in, or when they get it back. Their written work therefore sometimes contains careless errors in spelling and punctuation. Displays in classrooms contain examples to support pupils' learning, but these are not all organised well enough for pupils to refer to, so that they can easily identify the key skills that they need to develop.
- Work in pupils' books and from observing lessons indicate that teaching is improving. In particular, the introduction of a structured approach to teaching writing means that work is planned which builds more clearly on what pupils have already learnt. Pupils are beginning to learn skills for writing more imaginatively and in a broader range of styles, but these not yet well developed in their work. Pupils are encouraged to read and think about different texts and to use what they read to improve their writing. Pupils in Year 3, for example, were making good links between 'speech bubbles' and the formal structures needed to write and expand a play script.
- There has been a good focus on teaching number skills and calculations, which is clearly improving pupils' achievement in this aspect of mathematics. However, pupils sometimes spend a long time practising calculations, rather than being challenged to use their skills and deepen their understanding through solving problems in more relevant contexts.
- There are good relationships between adults and pupils. Regular praise and encouragement mean that most pupils take pride in their work and feel that their efforts are valued. Tasks are usually explained clearly, and pupils' understanding of what they are expected to learn is checked closely. Pupils are given time to develop and explain their ideas. For example, pupils in Year 4 were able to discuss their understanding of syllables and stanzas before applying this to writing their own poems.
- Enthusiastic and highly committed teaching assistants play a valuable role in supporting pupils' learning. They know the pupils well and work alongside teachers to plan appropriate activities. They provide an exciting variety of practical activities in support groups because they know that this is how some pupils learn best. They were checking pupils' understanding and skills at every stage as they taught the youngest children how to recognise and read sounds and how to pronounce sounds such as 'th'.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils do not yet make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics across the school. In most year groups, the school's data for 2014 show that pupils made expected progress from their different starting points, but too few did better than this over the year. Pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics across the school is lower than in reading.
- Results at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2014 indicate that progress from pupils' starting points was good. Standards improved from the previous year and were broadly average. However, results at the end of Key Stage 2 have declined over the past two years. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics in 2014 was significantly below average. The majority of pupils made the progress expected of them across Key Stage 2, but the proportion doing better than this was below average.
- Boys, in particular, did less well than girls, especially in writing. The school has addressed this, through providing extra support where needed, and planning work to interest boys. The school's most recent data for the autumn term show that gaps between boys' and girls' achievement are narrowing quickly.
- The impact of specific strategies put in place by senior leaders is clear from the autumn term data. Pupils' progress in writing and mathematics is accelerating, particularly in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2. The school recognises the need to accelerate further the progress of pupils in Years 5 and 6, in order to make up for a legacy of underachievement.
- The most able pupils are usually challenged effectively. The proportion of pupils reaching levels above those expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2 improved in 2014 and was broadly average. The school has established good links with a local high school so that a number of the most able pupils are developing the skills and understanding that they need to achieve the highest Level 6 in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils across the school develop a love of books and reading from an early age. Phonics (letters and the sounds they make) are taught successfully, through a range of games and activities which pupils thoroughly enjoy. The youngest children were developing their independent reading skills well, as they used pointers to read to each other. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2014 was close to average, which represents good progress from pupils'

starting points. Pupils who fall behind in their reading are given a special programme which helps them to catch up quickly.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive a range of appropriate support to meet their needs, both in lessons and in special groups. They mostly make the same expected progress as other pupils from widely differing starting points, and some of them make progress which is better than this.
- The school's published data for 2014 shows that disadvantaged pupils made progress in reading and mathematics which was similar to that of other pupils in the school, but their progress in writing was lower than that of other pupils in the school. Their progress in reading was similar to other pupils nationally, but was lower than other pupils nationally in writing and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils who left the school in Year 6 were approximately three terms behind other pupils in the school in reading and mathematics and five terms behind in writing. Compared to other pupils nationally, they were four terms behind in reading and mathematics and five terms behind in writing. These gaps were due in part to a number of pupils who had complex behavioural and learning needs, or who transferred to the school towards the end of Key Stage 2. The progress of disadvantaged pupils in the school is being tracked particularly closely and the additional funding is being used well to support them. The school's most recent data indicates that gaps in attainment between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils narrowed between July and December 2014.

The early years provision

is good

- The majority of children start school with knowledge and skills which are below those which are typically expected for their age, particularly in communication and language development and their understanding of the world.
- Most children, whatever their starting points, go on to make good progress in the early years, because children are looked after well and the quality of teaching is good. Adults get to know the children quickly and plan carefully to meet their widely differing needs. They make sure that they help children to catch up by developing their speaking and listening skills and giving them a wide variety of different experiences. The proportion of pupils who reach a good level of development at the end of the Reception class is a little below average. However, children are well prepared for their future learning in Year 1 because their personal and social skills and attitudes to learning are developed particularly well.
- Children are confident and independent as they explore the exciting activities on offer. They quickly learn to share and take turns. Children were cooperating together especially well as, dressed in hard hats and high visibility jackets, they mixed 'cement' and built 'brick' houses. Opportunities for children to develop their basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics are everywhere. Children attending the 'vet's surgery' were writing about what was wrong with their pets, while jigsaws and large mathematical apparatus helped them to order and recognise numbers.
- There is good leadership in the early years. There are effective and accurate procedures for observing what children are learning. Their achievements are recorded both electronically and in beautifully presented learning journeys which are shared with parents. All staff have a good understanding of how well individual children are doing and what they need to learn next. They work well as a team and regularly reflect on their practice. They know that they still need to develop activities more fully in the outdoor area.
- Children's good behaviour, their understanding of routines and their enthusiasm for learning show that they feel safe and secure. There are good systems in place to keep children safe, including at the end of the school day.
- Parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning. 'Wow moments' from home are included in children's learning journeys. Home-learning activities, when children have worked with their parents on activities such as making model volcanoes, have proved especially popular.

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	119447
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	456173

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jason Clemson
Headteacher	Vicky Axon
Date of previous school inspection	25 April 2012
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