

Burnley St Stephen's CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School

Woodgrove Road, Burnley, Lancashire BB11 3EJ

Inspection dates

6–7 July 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school provides a harmonious and nurturing environment in which pupils thrive, both personally and academically.
- The new headteacher has galvanised senior leaders and governors to establish a highly positive culture that has transformed the school.
- Senior leaders' actions are sharply based on accurate and honest self-evaluation of the school's work. They have strengthened the quality of teaching and raised standards.
- Good leadership, teaching and assessment in the early years promotes effective learning.
- Pupils make good progress in a range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils say that they feel happy and safe in school and parents overwhelmingly agree.
- Pupils behave well in classes and around the school. They are polite and welcoming and enjoy their time at school.
- Governance is good. It is well organised and provides effective challenge and support for school leaders.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is a strength of the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not move the most able pupils on to harder work quickly enough or expect them to work unsupported.
- A previous legacy of weak teaching in the early years still impedes boys' progress in writing in Year 1.
- The new assessment system is not yet fully established across all subjects.
- Pupils' awareness of cultures beyond their town is not yet well developed.
- Parents are not yet as fully engaged as they could be in the life of the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - the school's new assessment system is consistently well established, not only in English and mathematics but across all subjects, in order to meet the higher expectations of the new national curriculum
 - teaching in the early years further improves outcomes for boys in writing, so that they make a flying start into Year 1
 - teachers move the most able pupils quickly on to harder work as soon as they are ready and give them more opportunities to work without the support of adults, so that more pupils exceed the progress expected of them, especially in mathematics.
- Improve leadership and management, by:
 - encouraging more parents to take an active part in the life of the school, so that they have a greater say in matters that affect them and their children and a clear understanding of new policies and procedures
 - building on the school's strong links with its immediate community to broaden further pupils' awareness of different cultures further afield.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- In the 10 months since the new headteacher's appointment, she has transformed the culture of the school through her determination and resilience. She has set a very clear direction for the school's improvement, based on an accurate and honest self-evaluation of the school's work.
- The headteacher's ambition for the school is shared by other leaders, governors and staff, who support fully the often challenging changes that she has put in place. These have begun to make a visible difference to the quality of education provided by the school. The astute appointments that the headteacher has made at all levels of management have added great capacity to improve the school.
- Throughout this period of change, the headteacher's approachability and visibility around the school have won her the respect of staff, parents and pupils alike. The school knows that there is scope for more involvement with parents in changes that affect them and their children, for example changes to policies and procedures.
- Senior and middle leaders embrace the high expectations the headteacher has set for the school. This is because their roles and responsibilities are clear and they appreciate the ample opportunities that they have for training to support them in their work.
- Processes for holding staff to account for the progress of their pupils and for improving the quality of teaching are much more rigorous than previously. The impact of these strategies is evident in the good quality of teaching noted in this inspection and the improving outcomes for pupils.
- New, much stronger systems for checking aspects of the school's performance give leaders and governors a sharp, shared knowledge of the strengths and the remaining areas for further development in teaching and in other aspects of the school's work.
- Weaker areas are more quickly identified and, despite some remaining variations between subjects and year groups, most pupils have begun to make faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and teachers are excited by the possibilities of the new national changes and higher expectations of pupils.
- Leaders are designing a curriculum which aims to be even more relevant to pupils' needs and other interests and aspirations across the full range of national curriculum subjects. Pupils enjoy the wide variety of sporting and artistic activities available to them at lunchtimes and after school. The curriculum has not been fully developed to provide opportunities for pupils to learn about a range of cultures beyond their own locality.
- The school has responded effectively to national changes to the assessment of pupils' progress. Leaders have developed a robust system based on expectations of pupils' progress in relation to their age group. Assessments are rigorously checked for accuracy in school, through local clusters of schools and by the local authority.
- The school recognises that there is more work to be done to secure the new assessment system consistently across all year groups and in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school's wise use of the extra physical education (PE) and sports funding is evident in the rising participation rates of pupils in physical activity. The support of the local football club has also improved the quality of teaching in PE and funded extra equipment to widen the variety of sports provided.
- The impact of the school's effective use of the pupil premium funding is clear in the narrowing gaps in attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils compared to other pupils.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Under the leadership of the very capable chair, governors have sustained their passionate commitment to the school's improvement since the previous inspection. They are eager to support the work of the new headteacher and other leaders. Governors greatly appreciate the new ethos of transparency that the headteacher has established and the readiness with which information about the school's performance is shared.
 - Governors put their wide range of professional experience and expertise at the service of the school. They are good critical friends, who ask good questions at meetings. They are well prepared to challenge leaders when necessary. Governors are equally ready to support the school and look for opportunities to check that current improvements are both recognised and sustained. Governors monitor the school's finances carefully and are aware of their responsibility to plan for the long-term future of the school.
 - The school makes good use of the additional funding it receives for disadvantaged pupils and for sports;

this has contributed to better outcomes for pupils in both areas.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Systems in place to check the suitability of staff during recruitment meet requirements. Staff are trained to understand their role in child protection. The school works effectively with outside agencies to support the most vulnerable pupils and their families. Leaders have established an ethos in which the safeguarding of pupils is a priority.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The school's own very detailed monitoring records, pupils' written work and inspectors' observations of teaching confirm that teaching, learning and assessment have improved markedly since the previous inspection. Teaching is now consistently strong. Pupils, therefore, enjoy their learning and make at least good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers take pride in their well-organised classrooms and bright displays that support pupils' learning and develop their resilience. Teachers are enthusiastic and have positive relationships with pupils. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan activities that interest and enthuse their pupils in turn and promote their sustained progress.
- Teachers insist on the use of subject-specific terminology to enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers' frequent use of effective questioning skills allows them to assess the level of pupils' learning and deepen it further.
- Teachers consistently comply with the school's marking policy, ensuring that pupils receive helpful feedback on their work and are clear about the next steps in their learning. Pupils generally take pride in the presentation of their work.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed to provide good-quality support for pupils across the school. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported by teaching assistants who skilfully seek to maximise the learning of these pupils and their involvement in lessons.
- Phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is taught systematically in small groups in the early years and key stage 1 and children enjoy the variety of games through which they learn. Pupils who read for inspectors did so accurately and fluently, using strategies they had learned to correct themselves when they stumbled over unfamiliar words. Pupils are keen readers and are frequent visitors to the school's library area.
- Standards of writing improved significantly for most pupils in the 2015 national tests. Boys' writing in Year 1 is not as well developed because of a legacy of weak teaching in the early years. Work in pupils' books and displays of pupils' writing around the school point to better progress in writing for most pupils this year.
- The more demanding national curriculum is raising teachers' expectations of pupils in mathematics. Pupils are encouraged to discuss different strategies for solving mathematical problems by themselves, which helps teachers to assess pupils' understanding and progress. This good practice is not yet routinely spread across the school.
- While the most able pupils make the progress expected of them in mathematics, not enough of them exceed it, because teachers do not challenge pupils quickly enough to move on to harder work when they are ready.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are typically polite and friendly. They speak confidently with visiting adults and show well developed social skills in introducing their friends and siblings to the inspectors.
- Pupils say that they enjoy learning, their favourite subjects being reading, writing, mathematics, sports and art. They have many chances to reflect on spiritual questions and the deep concepts underpinning the subjects they study, such as freedom and slavery in a lesson about ancient Greek city states.
- The opportunity for pupils to develop their personal and moral principles is a core value of the school. Pupils know the importance of respect for others and of making a positive difference to their community.
- Pupils take part keenly in fundraising for local and global charitable causes. They enjoy their responsibilities as school councillors and play leaders in breaks and lunchtimes.

- The school's welfare arrangements are good. Its most vulnerable pupils are nurtured through many outside partnerships that support pupils' physical, emotional and mental needs well. This is confirmed by the good progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disability.
- Pupils feel safe and know that, if needed, there is someone to help them. All pupils spoken to said that they can turn to their teacher or any other adult to help them with a problem if required.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The atmosphere in and around the school is orderly and calm, because pupils move around the school buildings and grounds sensibly and take care of each other. They take pride in the school and do their best to keep it clean and tidy.
- Pupils learn, play and socialise with one another happily. One of the younger pupils told inspectors that the best thing about the school was 'all the things we can play with', reflecting the impact of the sports premium funding. Pupils make good use of the extensive playing fields and the equipment that is provided for them.
- Lessons proceed smoothly because pupils behave well. They respond quickly to teachers' requests and are interested in their work and ready to learn. Pupils join in lessons enthusiastically, asking and answering questions confidently.
- On rare occasions, when pupils lose concentration because teaching has failed to engage them in their learning, pupils say that some low-level disruption can occur. However, pupils spoken to are clear that teachers tackle such disruption effectively.
- Teachers comply fully with the school's new behaviour policy and pupils are made well aware of the different kinds of bullying through assemblies, anti-bullying weeks and personal, social, health and economic education. Pupils say that they know of no bullying related to ethnic differences or prejudice-based bullying. The majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, had few concerns about bullying.
- Exclusions have been very rare in the past five years, and only for very serious misdemeanours.
- The school has had significant success, since the previous inspection, in improving attendance. It is now just above average overall. The attendance of pupils who are persistently absent is also improving and senior leaders are sparing no efforts to ensure that such absence is eradicated swiftly.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils do well at this school. Over the past two years since the previous inspection, standards have improved in all subjects. They were at least in line with the national average in both key stage 1 and key stage 2 in 2015 and outcomes in writing were significantly above average at key stage 1 for most pupils.
- Until recently, the early years provision has not benefited from consistently good management and teaching. Outcomes for children in the early years have improved greatly with the advent of a new leader who is highly committed to early years education.
- The school's strong systems for assessing children's starting points on entering Reception are moderated by the local authority. Assessment information shows that, from a very low base, the proportion of children who reach a good level of development is improving and should at least meet age-related expectations in 2016. This represents good progress from children's starting points.
- In 2015, the proportion of pupils who met the standard in the phonics screening checks exceeded the national average. Most current Year 1 pupils are on track to at least meet the standard in 2016.
- In this small school it is difficult to compare with certainty the achievement of different groups that fluctuate year on year. The school's new assessment processes point to variation in the attainment of different year groups in reading, writing and mathematics. Some of this variation is also the result of historically inconsistent teaching and difficulties in staffing, which have since been eradicated.
- The proportions of pupils meeting and exceeding their age-related expectations between key stage 1 and key stage 2 are set to rise in the current year by 4% to 9% in reading, 3% to 4% in mathematics and 4% to 24% in writing, depending on the year group. This represents good progress from pupils' starting points.
- Gaps in the progress of key groups of pupils (including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the disadvantaged) have narrowed quickly and most of these pupils have made similar progress to their peers.

- The most able pupils have not achieved as well as they should, especially in mathematics, as a result of lack of challenge in the teaching of these pupils in some year groups. This is confirmed by work seen in books during the inspection and is a high priority for the school.
- By the time pupils reach the end of Year 6, they have been well prepared for their move to secondary school so that they can take advantage of the new challenges that lie ahead.

Early years provision

is good

- School leaders have taken effective action to strengthen the quality of the early years provision since the previous inspection. Following a period of inconsistency in management and teaching, leaders have appointed a new early years leader who is highly committed to her role.
- As a result of the inspiring leadership of this new leader, the early years provision and outcomes have improved quickly and are now moving swiftly to good. There is now much better communication with parents in their homes, and visits to other settings, before pupils join the school.
- The early years team, therefore, has much more information from which to assess children's levels of development and the kinds of play that they enjoy, so that they settle quickly into the school.
- Parents appreciate the many other ways in which the team helps them to know what and how well their children are doing. Regular updates about the early years curriculum, activities for parents to do at home with children and 'show and tell' books are all successful initiatives in engaging parents more fully with their children's learning.
- The early years pupil premium is effectively used to provide extra teaching assistants to support disadvantaged children. The early years pupil premium (EYPP) is additional funding for early years settings to improve the education they provide for disadvantaged 3- and 4-year-olds.
- Teaching assistants receive training in questioning that moves children's learning quickly forward and in effective planning for the children's progress.
- Staff in the early years team know each child very well. Adults monitor children's development and have an accurate knowledge of their current achievement. Regular liaison with the local authority's early years lead ensures that judgements about children's progress are appropriate and robust.
- Developing children's reading skills is a high priority for the school. Phonics teaching in the early years is strong. Pupils benefit from a range of enjoyable songs and routines as well as challenging games, in both the inside and outside areas.
- This helps children gain confidence, for example, with sounding out letters and pronouncing frequently used words. All these strategies contribute to the development of the children's early reading skills and sentence writing. Writing is now being taught more effectively.
- Children behave well. They know what is expected of them and quickly comply with instructions. Children learn resilience in working alone and collaborate happily in pairs or large groups, in both inside and outside areas, as they discuss the many options they have for indoor and outdoor learning.
- Staff are vigilant about ensuring children's safety and support children to develop good habits for keeping themselves safe and healthy.

School details

Unique reference number	119486
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10012192

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

School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Philip Lombard
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Cornwell
Telephone number	01282 427848
Website	www.st-stephens-ce12.lancsngfl.ac.uk
Email address	head@st-stephens-pri.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 June 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been significant changes to the senior leadership of the school since the previous inspection, including a new headteacher.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms, sometimes accompanied by the headteacher and visited smaller groups of pupils in additional sessions. Some of the visits to lessons were undertaken with the headteacher. In all lessons, the inspector looked at pupils' books in order to evaluate the quality of learning over time.
- Additionally, inspectors carried out a scrutiny of pupils' written work in a range of national curriculum subjects.
- Inspectors talked formally and informally with pupils during breaks and lunchtimes and in short meetings.
- The inspector met with the chair of the governing body and eight governors and held a meeting with two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered 34 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 42 responses from the school's own survey of parents' views. One of the inspectors also spoke with parents at the start of the school day. It was not possible to access Ofsted's online staff questionnaire, but staff gave their views during meetings and informally.
- The inspector reviewed records provided by the school including information about pupils' progress, minutes of meetings of the governing body, documents relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding and records of monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.

Inspection team

Susan Wareing, lead inspector
Ann Dimeck

Her Majesty's Inspector
Ofsted Inspector

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