

Holy Trinity VC School

Bank Top, Darwen, Lancashire BB3 2RW

Inspection dates

16–17 May 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Over the last two years, the school has had three different leaders and there has been considerable instability in staffing. It is currently led by a very experienced interim headteacher, who is tackling the decline in standards since the last inspection.
- Many middle leaders are new in post and have not yet had time to make an impact on the school.
- The progress of current pupils is increasing but standards remain below average.
- The school does not check carefully enough on the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The personal education plans for children looked after by the local authority have not been reviewed regularly.
- The information on the school's website is incomplete.
- Teachers plan their lessons well. In most cases, the work matches pupils' abilities. However, the most able pupils are not being stretched enough academically.
- There is too little focus on developing pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar. Teachers do not always use correct grammar when talking to pupils or writing on the board.
- Pupils complain that their lessons are too often disturbed by others' poor behaviour. Some are concerned about the way that bullying is handled.
- The number of pupils who take part in extra-curricular activities is limited.
- In the early years, there is not enough focus on developing children's reading, writing and mathematics and standards in these areas are too low.
- Too many pupils are persistently absent from school.

The school has the following strengths

- The curriculum is broad and balanced and provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.
- The interim headteacher provides strong leadership. With her colleagues, she has made considerable improvements to the school.
- The new chair of the governing body is highly experienced. She and the governing body have clear strategies and a strong determination to improve the school.
- The additional funding to develop physical education and sports and to support disadvantaged pupils is used appropriately.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
 - reducing the recent disruption to staffing by appointing experienced, well-qualified staff, on a permanent basis, to the senior and middle-management teams
 - placing an unremitting focus on raising standards in all areas of learning
 - ensuring that the processes for checking on pupils' progress are used systematically to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress and that the funding to support these pupils is being used to best effect
 - working with the relevant local authorities and social workers to ensure that every child who is looked after has an up-to-date, high-quality personal education plan that is reviewed regularly and on time
 - ensuring that all the information on the website is updated regularly, so that parents and other stakeholders are fully informed about the work of the school.
- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - there is a greater and more-consistent focus on developing pupils' command of grammar, punctuation and spelling
 - all teachers use correct grammar, punctuation and spelling when talking to pupils and when providing models for writing
 - all pupils, particularly the most able, are challenged appropriately
 - all teachers have the highest expectations of all their pupils
 - adults in the early years place greater emphasis on developing children's reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- Improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by:
 - ensuring that the school's behaviour policy is applied consistently in all lessons, in order to minimise disruption to learning
 - checking regularly with parents and pupils that they are satisfied with the way that incidents of bullying have been handled
 - reducing the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school
 - working with parents to encourage more pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, there has been considerable turmoil in the school and standards have declined. Over the last two years, the school has had three different leaders and there has been considerable instability in staffing.
- The school is currently led by a very experienced interim headteacher, who has been in post since the beginning of this academic year. She is well supported by a deputy headteacher who joined the school at the same time.
- The interim headteacher and deputy headteacher work very well together and have made considerable efforts to tackle the weaknesses in the school. The changes, so far, have focused mainly on improving structures and procedures. These are also beginning to have an impact on pupils' outcomes, although standards are still below national averages.
- The school has recently introduced new processes for checking on pupils' progress and setting targets. These are not yet being used with precision to check on the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities nor to ensure that the funding allocated to support them is used to best effect.
- The personal education plans for children looked after by the local authority are not up to date. They do not include clear targets for attainment and progress and have not been reviewed regularly and in a timely way.
- The leaders have succeeded in gaining the support of staff in making positive changes, as is reflected in the staff's responses to the online questionnaire and in their discussions with the inspectors.
- The majority of the parents who spoke with the lead inspector were also complimentary about the school, as were those who provided their views online.
- The senior leaders have a realistic and accurate view of the school and recognise the need to provide greater challenge to pupils of all abilities, particularly the most able.
- The interim headteacher has worked to some good effect to develop the capacity for leadership across the school, through mentoring the deputy headteacher and developing the roles of middle leaders.
- Several of the coordinators have been appointed very recently and have had very little time to make much impact on their areas of responsibility. However, these teachers have had relevant experiences earlier in their careers and are well placed to draw on their expertise to consolidate and extend the improvements being made in the school.
- The school's curriculum is broad, balanced and carefully planned to cover the requirements of the national curriculum. These plans are clearly reflected in the work seen in pupils' books, in lessons and in displays around the school. The range of additional activities to extend and enrich pupils' experiences is growing but does not attract much support from the pupils. Of the 27 pupils who responded to the online questionnaire, over a half said that they rarely or never took part in extra-curricular activities.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and

the close links with the local church play an important role in ensuring this.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has recently been reconstituted, following an external review. There is currently one vacancy for a governor.
- The newly appointed chair of the governing body is highly experienced and has a clear idea of what needs to be done to improve the school.
- The governors have received a considerable amount of training and they have a clear action plan for further development. They have also worked closely with the school council to develop a new vision statement for the school.
- The representatives of the diocese and the local authority have provided well-coordinated support for the governors and senior leaders during a difficult period in the school's history.
- There are clear plans to stabilise the leadership through the appointment of a substantive headteacher. The governors also have well-formed contingency plans in the event of their not being able to make an appointment in the interviews that were scheduled to take place shortly after the inspection.
- The governors have ensured that the school makes appropriate use of the physical education and sports funding to increase the confidence and expertise of staff, as well as to extend the range of activities available to the pupils.
- The information, published on the school's website, on governors' attendance at the governing body meetings and the list of their pecuniary interests are out of date.
- The current plans for the use of the pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils do not appear on the website. The plans that are published do not include sufficiently clear targets and expectations against which the impact of such expenditure can be measured. However, the school does use the funding appropriately to support these pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's safeguarding policy is up to date, is clear and takes account of the most recent legislation and guidance. It covers all the required areas, including sexting, female genital mutilation, forced marriage and combating extremism and radicalisation. It is supported by appropriate policies on combating bullying and promoting good behaviour and e-safety. A member of the teaching staff has specific responsibility for the latter and pupils and parents are given regular advice on how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and social media. The school has a clearly defined policy for the appropriate use of physical restraint.
- Staff and governors have received up-to-date training on safeguarding and the staff to whom inspectors spoke knew what to do and whom to contact if they had any concerns about a child's welfare.
- The school works closely with a range of external agencies to support families

experiencing particular difficulties.

- The pupils who spoke with the inspector said that they felt safe at school but not all of them felt safe when travelling to and from school. They all knew whom to contact if they had any problems and were confident that they would receive appropriate help.
- Of the parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, the majority said their children are safe at school. This reflected the comments made by the parents who spoke with the lead inspector.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The teachers plan their lessons well and, in most instances, ensure that the work matches the abilities of specific groups of pupils.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work very effectively together to ensure that pupils of all abilities receive timely and appropriate support. On occasion, the support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is provided almost exclusively by the teaching assistants, with limited input from the teacher.
- The quality of questioning is variable. In the best instances, the teachers structure and sequence their questions carefully to enable the pupils to extend and develop their thinking. For example, in one lesson, the pupils were discussing sections of a story in small groups. The teacher listened carefully and made timely interventions to move the pupils on to thinking about different aspects of the text and not to confine themselves to one aspect: in this case, the emotions felt by the characters. In contrast, some staff rely too heavily on answers volunteered by the pupils and do not check on the understanding of those who are less forthcoming. The latter then lose concentration. They do not disturb others but their learning slows.
- The most able pupils are not being challenged sufficiently. This is evident in lessons, as well as in the work in books. When they do provide high challenges, teachers sometimes lack the confidence to let the most able pupils tackle the work on their own and to learn from their mistakes. The most able pupils are also held back by not making best use of their existing knowledge. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils were using number lines to solve a problem involving very large numbers. As a result, they took a long time to work out an answer that several of them had already calculated mentally. The work in books showed that some pupils were continuing to perform the same type of mathematical work when they had already clearly mastered a particular concept or technique.
- The school's marking policy is not being applied consistently. For example, when the teachers ask the pupils to correct or extend their work, pupils do not always do so but this attracts no comment. There are instances where pupils are repeatedly asked, in successive pieces of work, to improve the quality of presentation but to no effect.
- Across the school, there is an insufficient focus on developing pupils' command of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Errors are not corrected consistently, with the result that pupils continue to use the wrong spelling or verb construction. Teachers do not always provide pupils with correct models of grammar when speaking to them or when writing on the board.
- The senior leaders have recently overhauled the assessment system to encourage staff

to be more actively involved in checking on pupils' progress and in using the information to provide appropriate, focused support for particular individuals or groups of pupils. The impact of these changes is beginning to be reflected in teachers' planning and assessment but it is not yet consistently evident.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Almost all the pupils who spoke with the lead inspector and most of those who completed the online questionnaire said that they enjoy coming to school.
- Pupils said that bullying does occur, but inspection evidence shows it is dealt with effectively. Of the pupils who responded to the online questionnaire, the majority said that bullying was resolved well but a sizeable minority disagreed with this. The parents who completed the questionnaire also expressed some concerns about the way in which bullying is handled by the school.
- Examination of the school's records shows that bullying incidents, including racist bullying, are carefully recorded and appropriate actions are taken.
- The pupils relate well to each other, to their teachers, to other adults and to visitors to the school. They have the confidence to initiate conversations with visitors, but do not try to be too familiar.
- In some lessons, pupils take too long putting down their pens and pencils to listen to the teacher and time is wasted as they move from one activity to the next. Occasionally, pupils lose concentration when, for instance, the teachers do not involve them sufficiently in discussions or when explanations are too long.
- The school provides good support for pupils' spiritual development through its close links with the church. Pupils take their daily acts of collective worship seriously and sing the hymns with confidence and expression. The worship team plays an important part in the life of the school.
- The pupils have a number of opportunities to contribute to the leadership of the school through acting as peer mediators, reading rangers, members of the school council and subject ambassadors. They develop their concern for the wider community through their collections of charities and their eco-council work.
- Pupils develop an understanding of a range of cultures through their work in geography, through studying various faiths and through the school's connection with the local mosque. Pupils make regular visits to the local theatre and the school's choir regularly takes part in local events, including appearing at Blackburn Cathedral.
- Displays around the school show the work that pupils have conducted on British values, with a particular focus on women and men, from a range of cultural backgrounds, who have made significant contributions to life in Britain.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils behave well in and around the school. They line up without fuss to buy their snacks at breaktime and know precisely where particular age groups are allowed to play.
- In general, the pupils treat the environment with respect and keep it in good order. At the end of lunchtimes, however, the catering staff have to spend far too much time sweeping up an unnecessary amount of food that has been dropped on the floor.
- The leaders have worked hard to improve the standard of behaviour in lessons and to provide teachers with clear strategies to ensure that pupils behave well. The impact of this work is variable. In the best instances, the pupils show a high degree of concentration. This was seen, for example, in a lesson where pupils sat totally silently and enthralled as the teacher read a story to them. In another lesson, the pupils were quick to grasp what was required of them in a discussion exercise and organised themselves efficiently into groups and arranged who would be first in the 'hot seat'. As a result, very little time was wasted.
- The pupils who spoke with the lead inspector complained about disturbances in lessons, especially in two classes. This echoed the responses of pupils to the online questionnaire and a number of parents who spoke to the inspectors.
- Attendance has been poor for specific groups over the last three years. Persistent absence has also been high. Attendance has improved this year and is currently in line with the most recent national average. However, there is still a considerable degree of persistent absence.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In recent years, the results for pupils in national tests and assessments have tended to be below average. However, the school's records show clear signs of improvement in pupils' standards since the beginning of this academic year. This is because staff now have a greater knowledge of how well pupils are progressing. They are able to identify those pupils who are falling behind and give them better support at an earlier stage.
- Results in the phonics screening test at the end of Year 1 have been consistently below average since 2013. This has been the case for all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. For the last three years, girls' and boys' results have been below those of girls and boys nationally. The school's records show a considerable improvement this year, with the proportion of pupils likely to reach the expected level being far closer to last year's national average. Boys are doing better than girls.
- The proportion of pupils who reached the expected level in phonics by the end of Year 2 was in line with the national average in 2015. Last year, there was a decline in the performance of all pupils, apart from those who had special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school's records show that the proportion of pupils likely to reach the expected level by the end of Year 2 this summer is likely to be below average, mainly because of the nature of that particular cohort. Girls are doing better than boys.
- The standards reached by pupils at the age of seven were below or well-below average

from 2013 to 2015. Last year, overall results were again below average. However, the proportions of middle-ability pupils who reached the expected levels or achieved greater depth of learning were significantly above average in writing and mathematics. This was also true for girls in reading. Results for disadvantaged pupils were variable. For example, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who achieved greater depth of learning was significantly above average in reading, but significantly below average in writing. Boys' results were also inconsistent; they were better in writing than in reading and mathematics.

- The school's records indicate that results for seven-year-olds are likely to be below the national averages again this year. However, since last September, the speed of progress made by pupils has accelerated considerably. This is clearly evident in the work in pupils' books. Through being asked to provide explanations for their answers, pupils are encouraged to think more deeply about their work. As a result, pupils of all abilities are provided with challenge and this is contributing to the progress they are making.
- From 2013 to 2015, results for 11-year-olds in reading and mathematics were in line with national averages and better than average in reading. In 2016, results in all three subjects were below average for all pupils and for disadvantaged pupils.
- The progress made by pupils between the ages of seven and 11 has declined. From 2013 to 2015, it was generally in line with or above the national average. In 2016, however, it was significantly below average in writing, with middle-ability pupils being in the lowest 10% of schools nationally. Progress was significantly below average and in the lowest 10% in at least one subject for disadvantaged pupils, girls, boys and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The school's records indicate that there have been improvements since last September, with the rates of progress increasing considerably. This was borne out by the work seen in pupils' books. The pupils who were heard reading did so with a fair degree of fluency. In the best instances, they were able to identify grammatical features and to give a clear summary of what they had read so far. At times, they rushed their reading and did not have secure techniques for deciphering words that were new to them.
- The changes introduced by the new leadership team are beginning to arrest the decline in standards, but there is still considerable room for improvement before outcomes are good.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- As in the rest of the school, there have been considerable changes of staffing in the early years. The setting has had three different leaders over the last two years and the present lead has only recently assumed the role, although she has been teaching in the school for some time. She has participated in the wide range of in-service training that has been provided for staff since September and has also received training in her new role, through working with experienced staff in another school.
- Since taking on the role, the leader has introduced a literacy project which focuses particularly on children who have difficulty with their reading and writing. This is beginning to reap rewards. From next September, it will be extended to all the children

in the early years.

- The children's ability on entry is very low in reading, writing and mathematics but, in the other areas of learning, it is average or better. The children make progress during their time in the Reception Year. However, the combined figure for their level of development in mathematics and English is still below average, meaning that further work will be needed to help them catch up in Year 1. Most of the children enter the Reception Year without having attended a nursery. In preparation for entry, staff visit homes and local nurseries. When their children are in school, the parents are invited to 'stay and play' sessions and language and reading workshops. These are well attended.
- The setting is well resourced and staffed. The children are provided with a large, bright and well-organised learning environment inside and have access to a wide range of engaging activities outside.
- All the adults in the setting relate well to the children and support them in the activities they choose to do. In turn, the children respond with enthusiasm and talk readily about what they are doing. For example, children who were weeding a flower bed explained to the inspector that this would make the garden look nice and would help the plants to grow. They could also name the plants.
- Behaviour in the early years is generally good, although there are times when children shout out rather than waiting their turn to answer questions.
- Activities such as these help to consolidate and extend the areas of strength in the children's learning. However, there are insufficient opportunities to work on improving reading and mathematics, the areas where the children are weakest.
- Parents are involved in their children's learning and they often attend the 'stay and play' sessions. Language and reading workshops have been provided for parents and these have been well received and better equip them with the skills to help their children.
- The staff in the early years have good subject knowledge but do not always use it to best effect. For example, in a phonics lesson, the children revisited the work they had done previously on the sounds produced by combining two letters. They focused on the sound 'oo'. The teacher helped the children to work out whether the 'oo' in specific words was long or short but gave them too few opportunities to practise the sounds.
- The way in which the children practise their writing does not ensure that they produce well-formulated letters. They wipe their boards clean at the end of each activity, so there is no means of keeping a record of the progress made by individual children.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The teachers have paediatric first-aid qualifications and the leader is trained to run a forest school. Site checks are conducted regularly but not always immediately before children learn and play outside.

School details

Unique reference number	119357
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10024360

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	252
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Dot Thomson
Headteacher	Victoria Milne
Telephone number	01254 702119
Website	www.holytrinitydarwen.co.uk
Email address	office@holytrinity.blackburn.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–19 September 2012

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website. It omits information about governors' attendance at governing body meetings, the list of governors' pecuniary interests and the use of pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who enter or leave the school other than at the normal times is higher than average.
- The great majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time. They observed learning in classes. This included joint observations with the headteacher.
- The inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work and talked with them about their work.
- The lead inspector talked with parents as they brought their children to school. He also examined 16 responses to the online questionnaire for parents as well as communication from parents.
- The inspectors spoke with teachers and other staff in lessons and around the school and the lead inspector examined 18 responses to the online questionnaire for staff.
- The lead inspector met the chair of the governing body and four other governors. He also spoke with two representatives of the local authority and a representative from the Blackburn diocese.
- The lead inspector met with eight pupils chosen at random from Year 3 to 6. He also examined 27 responses to the online questionnaire for pupils.
- The inspectors also spoke with pupils in lessons, in the corridors and the playground.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and the school's development plan.
- The inspectors also scrutinised documents relating to standards, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Aelwyn Pugh, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ann Dimeck	Ofsted Inspector
John Shutt	Ofsted Inspector
Aleksandra Hartshorne	Ofsted Inspector

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