

Darwen St Peter's Church of England Primary School

Turncroft Road, Darwen, Lancashire BB3 2BW

Inspection dates

20–21 February 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
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

- Leaders have been unable to ensure that all groups of pupils make good progress and reach the standards of which they are capable. The attainment of disadvantaged pupils and the most able is consistently below average.
- The quality of teaching across the school is not consistently good. Not all teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils can, and should, achieve.
- Teachers do not routinely provide most-able pupils with activities that challenge and stretch their learning and this slows their progress.
- The school's approach to the leadership and teaching of phonics lacks rigour and consistency. Pupils' progress in phonics is not quick enough and so too few pupils reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check.
- Many middle leaders are relatively new to the school or to their roles. They have good knowledge of their areas of responsibility and lead with enthusiasm. However, their skills in using assessment information and monitoring the effectiveness of teaching are at an early stage of development.
- The proportion of children in the early years reaching a good level of development is consistently below average. Too few children make swift and secure progress because teaching is not consistently well enough matched to their learning needs.
- Improvements to provision in the early years since the last inspection have had limited impact because staff are not fully confident in supporting and extending children's independent learning.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher is reflective and knows the school well. Despite significant challenges with staffing and leadership, she has ensured that St Peter's remains a happy and caring school.
- Behaviour in the school is good.
- There are promising signs that leaders' actions are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils enjoy the variety of learning experiences that the school provides for them.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning and so accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - eradicating inconsistencies in the effectiveness of teaching and ensuring that all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - ensuring that teachers consistently set work which stretches and challenges the most able pupils
 - ensuring that the teaching of phonics enables pupils to acquire key phonics skills more rapidly and then apply them to their reading and writing.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - developing the skills and confidence of middle leaders in using performance information in order to raise standards
 - ensuring that checks on the quality of teaching and learning are suitably focused on their impact on pupils' outcomes
 - ensuring that the school's approach to teaching phonics is clear and consistent and secures swift and sustained progress.
- Improve the effectiveness of provision in the early years so that a greater proportion of children achieve a good level of development by:
 - ensuring that leaders and staff use assessment information more effectively so that teaching is better matched to children's learning needs
 - developing the skills of all staff in supporting and extending learning, particularly when children are selecting activities for themselves.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- School leaders have been unable to secure necessary improvements in outcomes for pupils. As a result, levels of attainment have generally remained below average in the early years, in phonics and for most-able and disadvantaged pupils across the school. Leaders' efforts to bring about improvements have been hampered by unexpected and unavoidable staff absences. The school has replaced absent leaders with a number of new leaders who have limited experience in their new roles or are new to the school.
- The headteacher has an honest and realistic view of the challenges that the school is facing and the school's development plan correctly identifies those areas in need of improvement. The headteacher's drive and passion for the school have ensured that staff morale has remained high and she is working hard to support and develop the less experienced leaders across the school. There are now encouraging signs that some of the actions taken by leaders are beginning to bear fruit.
- One area in which improvements have been made and are beginning to have a positive impact is in provision for disadvantaged pupils. The acting deputy headteacher recently took responsibility for overseeing the use of the pupil premium funding. She correctly recognised that previous plans lacked clear actions and measurable targets and so were limited in their impact. There is now greater detail and precision in how the school uses the pupil premium funding, for example through targeted individualised support. The school's assessment information and work in pupils' books show that disadvantaged pupils are beginning to make quicker progress, particularly in reading and writing. In most classes, differences in performance are diminishing.
- The leaders for English and mathematics have also identified areas in need of improvement. For example, the mathematics leader has introduced a 'four-a-day' activity to ensure that pupils practise the four rules of number in a systematic, regular way. The English leader has made changes to the teaching of guided reading, bringing in new resources aimed at developing pupils' skills in inferring meaning from text. These improvements are having some impact on pupils' learning but variabilities in the quality of teaching across the school mean that their impact is inconsistent.
- There is shared responsibility for the leadership of phonics. As a result, roles and responsibilities are unclear and the school's strategy lacks precision. Rather than systematically using a single, clear approach to delivering phonics, teachers use a range of resources. This creates unnecessary inconsistency. Expectations of pupils' attainment in phonics are also not clear enough. As a result, the school has been too willing to accept underachievement in the Year 1 phonics check as long as most pupils made up the lost ground in Year 2.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), who leads the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, has a clear focus on supporting these pupils and the staff who work directly with them. She has improved the clarity of reporting about special educational needs and/or disabilities and has developed good relationships with parents and carers, who clearly value the help they receive. She received good support when settling into the SENCo role. Current pupils

who have SEN and/or disabilities typically progress well against their individual targets. This indicates that additional funding for special educational needs is well used.

- Current middle leaders, including the SENCo, have a good understanding of their different areas of responsibility and have a shared, clear determination to succeed. However, their use of performance information is still at an early stage of development and their checks on the quality of teaching and learning lack the precision needed to have maximum impact on raising standards.
- Good use is made of the additional funding for physical education (PE) and sport. The school promotes healthy lifestyles, for example by encouraging pupils to complete a kilometre walk regularly before school. There is a good range of sporting clubs and activities and pupils have had the chance to represent the school in various teams and events, including playing football at Blackburn Rovers' ground, Ewood Park.
- The local authority has provided timely and effective support for the school. It recognised that performance data indicated that the school was facing some challenges and so increased its involvement. For example, a specialist leader of education has provided support and mentoring for one of the school's less experienced leaders. The school is also impressively outward looking and has worked well with other schools within its local cluster.
- The school provides pupils with a suitably broad and balanced curriculum covering a variety of different subjects, topics and themes. Pupils talked enthusiastically about work they had completed based on topics as diverse as ancient Egypt, potions and the Second World War. Work in pupils' books shows that they develop subject-specific skills well, learning to make comparisons between different people and places, to use historical resources and locate places on maps. The curriculum is further enhanced by a good range of after-school clubs and trips to places of interest.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively. Pupils show care and consideration for others, such as when raising funds for charity, and also have a good awareness of British values, such as showing respect for other people's beliefs. The school has a clear and inclusive Christian ethos and leaders have been successful in developing good relationships between the school, St Peter's Church and the wider community.

Governance of the school

- Governors show a clear commitment to the school and are honest and reflective about the strengths and weaknesses of both the school itself and the governing body. They recognised that governors did not have a strong enough understanding of school performance information and so established a data sub-committee to better assess how well the school is performing. Governors also regularly attend training sessions in order to develop their skills and knowledge further. As a result, the overall effectiveness of governance is improving.
- Governors have made sure that there are suitable procedures in place for managing staff performance and that these are applied fairly. They also have a good understanding of the school's finances and ensure that money is appropriately targeted, such as in making improvements to the early years provision following the

last inspection. However, until recently governors have not been sharp enough in checking on the impact that the pupil premium funding is having on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Current information confirms that improvements have now been made.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders have ensured that all staff understand the importance of their role in keeping children safe and consequently there is a strong safeguarding culture across the school. Staff know what to do if they are worried about a child's welfare and leaders are quick to follow up any concerns that are raised. The school works well with external professionals to support vulnerable pupils and families.
- Thorough checks are made on staff, governors and regular visitors to the school to ensure that they are suitable people to work with children. The school maintains detailed, high-quality records of these checks.
- Staff and governors receive regular training to make sure that they have a good understanding of best practice in safeguarding. Leaders, including the link governor for safeguarding, ensure that the school's policies and procedures are up to date.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching across the school has not been consistently strong enough to ensure that pupils make the progress of which they are capable. Currently, while teaching in some classes and year groups is of a good quality, the overall picture across the school is too inconsistent.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They ensure that the most able pupils are regularly given tasks that challenge them and stretch their thinking. Where this is the case, pupils' progress is strongest. However, not all teachers share the same high expectations. Too many are willing to accept lesser amounts of work or to overly praise work that does not represent a pupil's best efforts. They are too slow to challenge most-able pupils or do not challenge them at all. Pupils' progress suffers as a consequence.
- In mathematics, teachers ensure that pupils have understood basic concepts and encourage them to develop their skills in using the four basic operations through daily practice. Work in pupils' books confirms that teachers plan activities that cover number and arithmetic as well as shape, space and measure. However, development of pupils' skills in problem solving and reasoning is less consistent and this has a negative impact on rates of progress, especially for the most able pupils.
- The teaching of reading is a priority for the school and leaders have provided teachers with support to plan, organise and resource sessions of guided reading more effectively. These improvements have been more successfully introduced in some classes than in others. Where reading is taught most effectively, teachers and teaching assistants skilfully question pupils, encouraging them to retrieve information and infer

meaning from text. However, this is not consistently the case and for too many pupils activities lack challenge.

- Phonics teaching has failed to secure good outcomes for sufficient pupils in the Year 1 phonics check. Although teachers regularly assess pupils' progress and attainment in phonics, there is not enough urgency to speed up the progress of those pupils who are falling behind. Resources used are not consistently well matched to pupils' phonics ability, which limits their effectiveness.
- There is good evidence of pupils' writing skills being developed effectively both in English lessons and across the wider curriculum. They write in different styles and for different purposes, such as writing poems or historical recounts. The majority of pupils write at an appropriate standard for their age.
- Teachers display good subject knowledge across other areas of the curriculum, engaging pupils well in learning across a varied range of topics. They help pupils to develop subject-specific skills such as using maps, creating timelines in history and making comparisons between different times and/or places.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support for individuals and groups of pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities. As a result, these pupils typically make good progress from their different starting points and towards their individual targets.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff and pupils get on well together and relationships are warm and respectful. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and are confident that there would always be an adult who they could talk to if they did have any worries.
- The school has ensured that pupils are given important messages about staying safe in different situations. For instance, e-safety sessions teach pupils how to stay safe when using the internet. Parents appreciate the proactive approach that the school has taken to teaching pupils about road safety.
- Pupils are aware of different types of bullying, including racism and cyber bullying. They say though that bullying is rare in their school and that any incidents that do occur are very swiftly dealt with.
- Pupils enjoy taking on positions of responsibility in school, such as being a member of the school council or a playground buddy. School council elections give pupils first-hand experience of the democratic process and current school council members are particularly proud of the work they have done to raise money for charities such as Christian Aid and Comic Relief.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite and friendly, and cheerfully welcome visitors to the school. They are proud of their school and take care to make sure that they look smart in their school uniform. Pupils talk enthusiastically about different aspects of school life that they particularly enjoy, including special events such as science week.
- Pupils' conduct around school is good. They move around the building sensibly and display good manners by holding doors open for adults. They enjoy breaktimes and make good use of the school's extensive outdoor areas, playing well together.
- Pupils across the school demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They are happy to answer questions and give their ideas and opinions. Pupils also listen well to both their teachers and their classmates and settle quickly to work. They behave well even at those times when their work is not sufficiently challenging or engaging and so lessons are seldom disrupted by off-task behaviour.
- A small number of parents expressed some concerns about behaviour in their responses to the Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. However, pupils' views and inspection evidence confirm that these concerns are unfounded. The school provides very effective support for those pupils who struggle to manage their own behaviour.
- Leaders have worked hard to promote the importance of good attendance, and to encourage families not to take holidays during term time. Despite their best efforts, recently attendance rates have declined and are now just below the national average. Work with disadvantaged pupils has been more successful, and the proportion of these pupils who regularly miss school is now falling.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Over time, the attainment of the most able pupils and disadvantaged pupils has not been good enough. In key stage 1, the attainment of both of these groups of pupils was below average in reading, writing and mathematics in 2016 and 2017. The picture was the same for disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2. The most able pupils' attainment in mathematics has also been consistently weak.
- Leaders recognised that disadvantaged pupils were underperforming and reviewed the support that the school was providing for them. There are indications that improvements are beginning to have a positive impact, particularly in reading and writing, and in most classes the differences between disadvantaged pupils' performance and that of other pupils are starting to diminish.
- The most able pupils currently in the school continue to underperform because they are not being consistently stretched and challenged by their teachers. A number of most-able pupils themselves confirmed to inspectors that they felt they were capable of achieving more.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check has declined over the last three years and is now well below average. The school's

approach to teaching phonics lacks urgency. Leaders have accepted too readily that pupils will catch up with the expected standard by the end of Year 2.

- Leaders were disappointed with results in the key stage 2 assessments in 2017. Attainment in mathematics, reading and writing was below average and pupils' progress in reading was in the lowest 10% of schools nationally. Staff absence and the late arrival of pupils into the cohort were both contributory factors. However, leaders recognised that improvements were needed in the teaching of reading to raise standards. Current assessment information shows that, for most pupils, progress in reading in key stage 2 is now improving.
- Published data shows that, in 2016 and 2017, a broadly average proportion of pupils in key stage 1 reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Inspection evidence and the school's own assessment data indicate that the attainment of current pupils in key stage 1 is broadly similar.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Children enter the early years with skills and knowledge that are below those typical for their age. In 2017, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development was below the national average, as it has been each year since the previous inspection. Too few children catch up quickly in their learning during their time in the Reception class and so each year roughly two out of every five children are not ready for the move into Year 1.
- The quality of the learning environment in the early years has improved since the previous inspection. Children now have the opportunity to learn in a well-resourced and attractive outdoor area and have access to exciting resources such as a mud kitchen. They also benefit from spending time working in the school's woodland area.
- The effectiveness of teaching in the early years is mixed. Children typically make more progress when working directly with a teacher or teaching assistant than when tackling independent activities. This is because staff are not fully confident in supporting and extending children's learning during times when children choose their own activities. As a result, learning opportunities are missed and children do not get the maximum benefit from the provision available.
- Children are beginning to use their developing phonics knowledge in their writing. For example, a group of children were observed working with their teacher writing a simple caption, sounding out the words as they wrote. However, most-able children are not making the rapid progress in writing or in phonics that they are capable of because teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough.
- The leader for the early years leads with enthusiasm. She has ensured that parents of children in the early years are well informed and feel involved in their children's learning, for example through running parental meetings and workshops. A typical comment from one parent was: 'Teachers work as a team with the parents and there are very effective home/school links.'
- Early years teachers and staff currently do not use assessment information as sharply as they could do to inform planning. As a result, teaching is not consistently fully

matched to children's learning needs, which slows the rate at which learning progresses. Leaders do not have a clear enough overview of children's progress across the whole Reception cohort.

- Relationships between adults and children in the early years are positive. Although some boys sometimes play boisterously outside, behaviour is typically good. Children are well cared for and learn and play happily together. Children who have SEN and/or disabilities are particularly well supported and make clear, small steps in progress from their individual starting points.
- Staff ensure that children in the early years are well cared for. The learning environment is safe and secure and welfare requirements are adhered to fully.

School details

Unique reference number	119458
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10045171

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	295
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Canon Fleur Green
Headteacher	Vicky Weddle
Telephone number	01254 701299
Website	www.stpeterscep.co.uk
Email address	office@stpetersdarwen.blackburn.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 June 2014

Information about this school

- St Peter's is a slightly larger than average size primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school is above average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced some turbulence in staffing caused by unexpected and unavoidable long-term staff absences, including of senior leaders. At the time of the inspection, the deputy headteacher was on maternity leave and her role was being covered by an acting deputy headteacher. A number of other middle leaders were relatively new to their roles.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school. They also looked at pupils' work in books, records of children's learning in the early years and other information about pupils' attainment and progress.
- Inspectors listened to two groups of pupils read and held discussions with two further groups of pupils. They also talked informally with pupils around the school.
- Inspectors considered the 19 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and talked informally with parents at the start of the school day. They also took into consideration 30 responses to the staff survey and 60 responses to the pupils' questionnaire.
- Inspectors met a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. They also had discussions with staff in the school, including the leader responsible for the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, the leader for the early years and the leaders for English and mathematics.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the local authority and the diocese.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents. These included information about pupils' attainment and progress, the school's reviews of its own performance and records of meetings of the governing body. They also examined safeguarding documentation and various records of pupils' attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

Neil Dixon, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Deana Aldred	Ofsted Inspector
Ann Dimeck	Ofsted Inspector

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