



Balderstone St Leonard's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119415
LEA Lancashire
Inspection number 280552
Inspection dates 9 March 2006 to 10 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Jackie Barnes

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Commons Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Balderstone
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 7LL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01254 812542
Number on roll	104	Fax number	01254 812542
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Doctor Teresa Roberts
Date of previous inspection	1 January 2001	Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Finch

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average rural school in an advantaged locality close to the Borough of Blackburn. Entitlement to free school meals is well below average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children start school with different skills and knowledge, but overall their achievement is above the expectations for their age group. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language; a small number also have an additional language at home. The school has close links with the church and the local community.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with many good features. This judgement is close to the school's own evaluation of good. The school has the confidence of most parents, a sound grasp of its own strengths and weaknesses, and good capacity to improve. Pupils are happy, attend well, enjoy their work and friends, and feel safe. Good teaching and learning lead to good progress in the Foundation Stage. Their personal development is good and they are well cared for by staff. By Year 6, standards are above average, and pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Lessons are prepared carefully and are often enjoyable, but the teaching and tasks are not always well matched to the needs of pupils, particularly more able ones, which slows their progress. This is mainly because the information from assessments of pupils' achievements is not used well enough to plan their future progress. The curriculum gives satisfactory opportunities for learning and helps pupils to know how to keep safe and healthy. The leadership and management of the school provide a welcoming and effective environment for pupils' personal growth and achievement. However, they are not yet rigorous enough to ensure that all pupils progress as well as they could. All those involved in leading and managing the school have a strong commitment to its improvement. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

not applicable

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further, especially for the most capable pupils.
- Analyse and evaluate the school's assessment information rigorously and use it to ensure that all pupils make good progress.
- Improve the planning and organisation of lessons so that pupils across the ability range have learning experiences which are well matched to their needs.
- Develop further the arrangements for rigorous strategic planning in order to identify clear priorities and timescales, and evaluate evidence of success, especially the impact on pupils' achievements.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress from the time they enter school. By the end of the reception year, almost all achieve the goals expected for their age, and many exceed them. In Years 1 and 2, progress is satisfactory overall. In 2005, the national assessment results for Year 2 were broadly average. Almost all pupils achieved the expected Level 2 but too few achieved the higher levels, especially in writing. The results for Year 2 show a declining trend over time. However, the school's evaluation indicates that more pupils are on course to achieve above average results in 2006. Results for Year 6 were generally above average and exceeded the school's targets. However, the gains made by the more capable pupils from their results in Year 2 were less than expected.

Pupils' progress in lessons is satisfactory overall. Nonetheless, some pupils in every year group are capable of brisker progress towards higher standards. Limitations in the links between the school's assessment of pupils' achievement and the planning of the next stage of their learning are slowing progress. Where the school has recognised that achievement needs to be improved, as in writing in Years 1 and 2, and has focused on this area, pupils have responded well and progress has rapidly improved. Most pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress, but a few are hampered by not having their work in lessons closely matched to their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well being are good. Most parents agree that this is a strength of the school. Pupils behave well, care for each other and are keen to learn. Attendance is above average and most enjoy their work, especially practical activities, and meeting their friends. There is great excitement among the older pupils who are due to take part in a residential visit. Pupils of all ages know about keeping themselves safe and healthy, and what to do if they have concerns. Outdoor play space is not generous, especially for the youngest pupils, but the hall is used well to ensure adequate physical activity.

Pupils' good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is well supported within the school, and also by the wider community and church. Pupils have useful opportunities to develop confidence and independence, such as organising fund raising and contributing to the work of the school council. Pupils are particularly alert to ecological issues and sensitive to disasters which overtake children at home and abroad. Opportunities for pupils to take an active part in improving their own learning are not yet consistently established. However, activities that harness their personal skills and reliability in lessons or homework often enhance their learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Lessons are well organised, with careful preparation of the resources and teaching points, and good management of pupils' behaviour. As a result, the teaching covers the content of the curriculum thoroughly, especially in literacy and numeracy. Teachers are particularly skilful at asking questions which focus pupils' attention on key points. Relationships between staff and pupils are almost always positive, which encourages pupils to participate in discussions and share their ideas. Some lessons include imaginative ways to capture pupils' interest and enthusiasm, keeping them actively engaged for the full lesson. Where this is not the case, although lessons are still taught systematically, they are less effective in stimulating pupils' thinking. This is mainly because the planning of pupils' learning is

too general and does not always provide the level of challenge to enable pupils to make the progress they could. The school's procedures for assessing pupils' progress, although conscientiously carried out, do not yet effectively influence the planning of their learning in lessons. As a result, some pupils find lessons too easy or too hard and this inhibits their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. All the required subjects are in place, with a suitable priority given to English and mathematics. Learning is enhanced by visits to places of educational interest, and by visitors, often from the local community, who share their interests and expertise. How to keep safe, lead a healthy lifestyle and build relationships regularly feature in lessons. The extra-curricular activities are not extensive, but they provide opportunities for sport and creative activities which the pupils enjoy, and which contribute to their personal development and healthy choices.

Overall, the curriculum enables most pupils, including those in the foundation stage, to achieve the standards expected for their age, with some scope for the most capable pupils to exceed these. However, the planning of the curriculum does not yet ensure that pupils' skills and knowledge are developed to the best of their abilities. Some adjustments to the timetables and organisation of groups are working well. Good examples are: the sustained study of a specific topic that is improving the quality of writing in Years 1 and 2; the extended studies in science which contribute to the school's science week, and the support groups in literacy. However, not all pupils are able to make the best of the curriculum when the day-to-day planning of lessons does not take sufficient account of what they need to make good progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Due attention is given to keeping the pupils safe, and procedures such as fire drills are undertaken systematically. Staff take good care of their pupils' welfare, and child-protection procedures are well understood. Relationships between staff and pupils are almost always very good, and pupils relate well to each other. All this creates a secure and positive environment for learning. Most parents are confident that their children are safe in school, and pupils agree. Pupils also agree with the school's view that bullying is rare and usually dealt with quickly and effectively. Very occasionally, and despite the school's efforts, an issue of harassment is not resolved immediately, which caused concern to the pupils involved and their friends and parents. Guidance and support for pupils' behaviour and personal development are good. They are less effective in helping them to make more rapid progress in academic work, mainly because of limited use of assessment information. However, recent developments in the marking of pupils' written work, together with the additional support of teaching assistants, particularly for pupils with learning difficulties, provide a good start to further improvements in guidance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall with some strong features. The small team of staff, well led by the headteacher, have ensured that the school is efficiently organised and provides a welcome for pupils, parents and visitors. The school's aims are clearly based on a strong faith commitment, and those related to the personal development of the pupils and the involvement of the community are successfully led and managed. For some time the school has been collecting assessment information on pupils' achievements, and has accurately identified through its own evaluation that assessment procedures need to be reviewed. However, the present arrangements for strategic planning are not rigorous enough. As a result, the school has been slow to use the information held on pupils' achievement well enough to ensure that they all make good progress towards suitably high standards. There is a clear and dependable commitment to regular review and improvement from all those involved in the school, including governors. The school's self evaluation is at an early stage of development. It incorporates parents' and pupils' views, and identifies the many developments that have been undertaken, but is not yet sufficiently focused on judging the effectiveness of these actions. However, the new partnership arrangement with the local authority is working well in helping the school to identify its main priorities and evaluate the impact of its actions.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

08456 404045

Mrs Catherine Finch

Balderstone St Leonard's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Commons Lane

Balderstone

Blackburn

Lancashire

BB2 7LL

10 March 2006

Dear Children

Thank you for making me so welcome in your school. I enjoyed talking with you and watching you work. You helped me to understand that you enjoy school, especially meeting your friends. You told me how much you like your teachers and that you feel safe in school. I heard about your favourite subjects, and it was clear that you know a lot about being healthy and about how to help the environment. You are also good at helping each other and taking care of children who are younger than you. Your behaviour is good and you treat adults with respect. You share your good ideas for improvements with your school council representatives, and they often get things done. Your school is a happy place and your teachers look after you well. Your headteacher has made sure that the school is calm and attractive, so that you can get on with your work and be successful.

I feel that many of you can be even better at your work than you are now. So I have asked your school to make sure that in lessons you are helped to make quicker progress, but still keep enjoying what you do.

Best wishes to you all.

Yours sincerely

J M Barnes

(Lead inspector)