



Darwen St Barnabas Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119456
LEA Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number 280561
Inspection dates 20 June 2006 to 21 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Dave Byrne

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Knowlesley Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Darwen
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Lancashire BB3 2JA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01254 702996
Number on roll	158	Fax number	01254 701463
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Clive Natrass
Date of previous inspection	1 October 1999	Headteacher	Miss Margaret Mitchell

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. They held meetings with the headteacher, individual staff, pupils, parents and governors, scrutinised a range of documentation and pupils' work, and visited every classroom.

Description of the school

Attainment on entry to the Reception class is average. The proportion of pupils with learning and/or behavioural difficulties is broadly average, as is the proportion eligible for free school meals.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which gives good value for money and is held in high regard by the vast majority of parents. Pupils like coming to school and enjoy the good quality of teaching that they receive. In its creed, the school states that '...we are family'. It achieves this through the very caring and secure environment it provides for every child. Pupils show their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in their good behaviour at all times, their enthusiasm for learning and their care and consideration for others.

In partnership with the local authority, the school has taken many initiatives that are raising standards. From an average level when they start school in Reception, children achieve well and make good progress. Standards at the end of Year 2 have been consistently above average since 2001. In Year 6, standards have improved sharply as a result of an improved management structure and better teaching, particularly in Key Stage 2. In 2005, standards were above average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils now in Year 6 have also made good progress and have achieved similar results. Pupils do particularly well in reading and mathematics. In writing, although standards are good overall, the more able pupils could do even better. This is mainly because they have too few opportunities to apply their writing skills in all subjects and in new, challenging situations. Inspectors also noted strengths in information and communication technology (ICT) and aspects of music.

One secret of the school's recent success is the way that staff have embraced the need for change. The introduction of better assessment systems has had a particularly positive impact because it enables staff and pupils to set targets for their academic and personal improvement. More remains to be done, however. Although they regularly check pupils' work, teachers do not make enough use of marking to explain to pupils how they can improve. The headteacher knows every child and cares deeply about their well-being. The new senior leadership team maintains a good focus on developing pupils both personally and academically. The school is well governed. Governors are well informed and keep a close eye on the school's performance. Since the last inspection, the school has improved in every area except in one. The accommodation and resources for outdoor learning for Reception children remain unsatisfactory. The school is rapidly improving, and its success in doing so creates a buzz of excitement amongst staff and pupils. It knows itself well and, given the good quality of leadership and management, the dedication of the staff and the support of the vast majority of parents, the school has the capacity to improve further in future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that the marking of pupils' work shows them how to improve.
- Raise the achievement of the more able pupils in writing.
- Provide a suitably resourced outdoor area for children in the Foundation Stage so that they have daily access to physical activities and make better progress in physical skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. The children start the Reception class with average standards, make good progress throughout the school and reach above average standards in Year 6. Pupils with learning and/or behavioural difficulties make good progress towards their individual targets.

In the Foundation Stage, children make good progress. By the end of Reception, the large majority reach the standards expected for their age and a significant number exceed them. In Years 1 and 2, good progress continues and, by the end of Year 2, standards have been consistently above average since 2001. The school believes this will again be the case this year. At the end of Year 6, standards have improved sharply in the last two years and, in 2005, were well above average overall in English, mathematics and science. Pupils do very well in reading and mathematics. They also do well in ICT and in musical composition and performance. The improvement stems from better teaching and management. Inspectors are convinced that this year's Year 6 pupils have continued to make good progress, and the school believes that results will be broadly similar to last year. Its records indicate that these pupils are on track to achieve the challenging targets set for them. Although standards in writing are above average overall, assessments show that the more able pupils could do better.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good, with good levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school motto of 'Going forward confidently' is successfully achieved. Whether it is performing their own musical compositions, independently learning on the computer, or helping with jobs around school, pupils do so in an assured way. They are keen to learn, and their good attendance shows how much they enjoy school. Pupils behave well and are polite and courteous. Their views are listened to. The school council develops their understanding of the democratic process and how to represent others. Pupils capably work in teams and cooperate well, showing the good qualities needed in citizens of the future. Their good social and academic skills prepare them well for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Throughout the school, pupils' smiling faces, willingness to learn and good progress reflect the good quality of teaching and learning. There are particular strengths in teaching the basic skills of reading, writing and number. In the Reception class, activities are carefully planned to meet children's needs, but the lack of suitable outdoor provision slows their progress in aspects of physical development. Teachers across the

school have high expectations of pupils, but in writing they have too few opportunities to apply and extend their good basic skills in new and challenging situations. Pupils like the way that teachers value their ideas and enjoy their increasing opportunities to get involved in debates and discussions. Under the guidance of a skilled ICT coordinator, computers are being used well to extend and support learning. Assessment is satisfactorily used to plan work that meets pupils' needs. Pupils are familiar with their targets for improvement in English, mathematics and science, but the use of marking does not consistently advise them how to achieve their next steps in learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. Significantly improved provision has made ICT an integral part of pupils' learning. In the main, the needs of all children in the Foundation Stage are successfully met. In Key Stages 1 and 2, all subjects are adequately planned and a good emphasis is given to developing the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Recent initiatives to link subjects are starting to benefit learning by adding excitement and relevance to lessons, but these links are not yet planned carefully enough. This is holding back the achievement of the more able pupils in writing. A satisfactory range of activities enriches the basic curriculum. Pupils enjoy attending choir, clubs for ICT and sports coaching. Poets, authors and theatre groups visit school and educational visits, for example, to Eureka in Halifax, extend learning in class. Spanish is included in the curriculum and provides a valuable addition to pupils' education. The carefully planned provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship effectively promotes pupils' personal development and their knowledge and understanding of how to keep safe and healthy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good and have improved since the last inspection. Parents accurately and overwhelmingly hold the view that pupils are well cared for, safe and secure. Risk assessments are effective. Child protection procedures are in place and recent training ensures that all procedures are understood by staff and governors. Pupils say there is always someone to go to if they have a problem and are confident that they will get help and guidance. Support for learning is good. Pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the sensitive help given by teaching assistants and the frequent monitoring of their progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has worked hard to raise standards and has widened her vision for the school by working closely with the local authority and other schools. As a result, standards have improved significantly at Key

Stage 2. She cares deeply about the welfare and well-being of every pupil, and her dedication to and consideration for others motivate and encourage staff and pupils alike. Her strong leadership has been directly responsible for raising academic standards, while maintaining good levels of pupils' personal development. Staff are astutely placed to get the best from their skills to benefit all pupils and ensure that the school gets the best from its budget. The school's improvement plan reflects an accurate evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses. Governance is good and all statutory duties are met. Governors are well informed about the school and are active in supporting and encouraging it to do better. Recent reorganisations of senior staff; the strengthening of teaching in Key Stage 2; the better use of assessment to monitor pupils' progress, and stronger management of ICT have all resulted in higher standards overall. This impressive record demonstrates the school's capacity to continue to improve.

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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?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	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?	2	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?	2	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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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

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To the pupils of:

Darwen St Barnabas Church of England Primary School

Knowlesley Road

Darwen

Lancashire

BB3 2JA

20 June 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for the friendly welcome given to us during our visit to your school. We enjoyed talking with you during lessons and at play, joining in lessons and sharing lunch. You certainly enjoy coming to St Barnabas and it strikes us that a smile is a requirement of being there! Wherever we looked, we saw happy, smiling faces, even when you were being asked to work hard!

We agree with you that your school is good. You are accurate in your view that the vast majority of you are well behaved and that bullying and aggressive behaviour are very rare. You talk very highly of your teachers. It is our view that your teachers are very caring and are working hard to make sure that each one of your needs are met. You clearly enjoy learning and most of you work hard and try your best at all times. From Reception upwards, your behaviour is good. You respect one another and are keen to help everyone. Your standards in English, mathematics, science and ICT are good, but we feel that some of you could do even better in writing. We have asked the school to find ways of helping you to do this.

The only way of really doing well in anything in life is to know how well you are doing so that you can work at getting better. We feel that your teachers and their assistants are showing you ways of doing better through your targets for learning. Marking, though, is an area where we feel you can get even more help and the school will be thinking about how to improve this area to help you.

Your headteacher is special. She knows you all very well and places your needs above everything else. She makes sure that your school is safe and has a family atmosphere. Although resources such as books and computers are fine, the children in the Reception class need better resources for learning outdoors. This is an area we feel the school can improve.

Thank you again for your good company. We hope you all do as well as you can in school, and continue to be thoughtful and helpful to others.

Yours sincerely

David Byrne and Joan Lock

(your school inspectors)