



# Darwen St James Church of England Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 119457  
**LEA** Blackburn with Darwen  
**Inspection number** 280562  
**Inspection dates** 9 May 2006 to 10 May 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Mark Williams HMI

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

|                                    |                    |                           |                     |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>              | Primary            | <b>School address</b>     | St James' Crescent  |
| <b>School category</b>             | Voluntary aided    |                           | Darwen              |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>         | 4 to 11            |                           | Lancashire, BB3 0EY |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>            | Mixed              | <b>Telephone number</b>   | 01254 703260        |
| <b>Number on roll</b>              | 165                | <b>Fax number</b>         | 01254 773989        |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>       | The governing body | <b>Chair of governors</b> | Mr David Darcy      |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b> | 1 June 2000        | <b>Headteacher</b>        | Miss Margaret Long  |

|                             |  |                                    |
|-----------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school serving an area with pockets of high social deprivation. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and the proportion identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities are high. A key feature of this school is the higher than average number of pupils who start or leave at times other than the beginning of the school year. Pupils' attainment on entry is well below that found nationally. There are a small number of pupils from Traveller families and families of asylum seekers. English is not the first language of nearly one tenth of pupils; this is broadly in line with national figures.

## 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 and improving school, offering a good education for its pupils and providing good value for money. Inspectors judge the school has good capacity to improve further. Every child clearly matters in this school.

Standards are well below average. However, nearly all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who join the school part way, achieve well. From very low starting points, pupils, including those in the Foundation Stage, make good and sometimes outstanding progress. This is the result of good, strong leadership and management which has created a culture of improvement based on pupils doing well in their work and developing good personal skills. The whole school community acknowledges the good improvements in the quality of teaching and the curriculum, and in the care, guidance and support offered to pupils. For example, the school has provided a number of well matched programmes of support for pupils who need it most.

The school has particular strengths in promoting the personal development and well-being of its pupils. However, despite its best efforts, attendance is below the national average owing to the disproportionate effect of a small minority of pupils.

The school knows itself well. Inspectors confirm the accuracy of its self- evaluation, although it was too modest about progress of pupils and teaching. The school has improvement plans of good quality to raise standards but they are not sufficiently clear about what pupils should achieve.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Specify more clearly in improvement plans what gains pupils are expected to make.
- Strengthen measures to combat the poor attendance of a minority of pupils.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

National test results at Year 6 are well below national averages. However, given the pupils' very low starting points and difficulties, this represents good progress across the school, including the Foundation Stage where pupils make good strides in developing early basic skills.

Nearly all pupils make good progress. In some cases, there are outstanding leaps in learning, for example the development of literacy skills for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those for whom English is not their first language. However, standards reached in national tests in Years 2 and 6 remain stubbornly low and do not reflect the progress pupils currently in the school are making in English, mathematics and science. This is owing to the high numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who begin or leave the school during the school year.

Targets for pupils' performance are challenging and represent the high expectations the school has for its pupils. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are on course to meet these targets. Pupils who are most at risk of not achieving well, such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or join the school part way, make at least good progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The personal development and well-being of pupils is good.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and reflects a deep sense of pride in their school and respect for all members of the school community. The pupils settle down quickly, mix well with each other and are polite, considerate and have positive attitudes. Their enjoyment of school is evident in their beaming faces. Their behaviour is particularly good. These positive characteristics enable pupils to make good progress and have been nurtured by the well thought-out provision made by the school's leaders. These include staggered break and lunchtimes when play areas are no longer overcrowded and pupils have space and freedom to play. As a result of such measures and the clear positive behaviour guidelines given, pupils freely report how safe and secure they feel at school. Pupils are beginning to exercise sensible choices independently. For example, they choose healthy options at lunchtime and regularly take part in sport.

The school has two enthusiastic and representative pupil bodies: the school council and the Eco council. These, along with the pupils' ability to work in groups in class and their sporting activities, are ensuring good positive contributions to the community. These are further enhanced by good links with the parish church and support for local charities. Pupils are making good progress in developing skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being.

Attendance is below the national average. The good progress the school has made in this area has been hindered by the poor attendance of a small minority of pupils and extended holidays taken during term time.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good with some outstanding features. As a result, nearly all pupils make good progress in their learning.

Lessons in all subjects are planned carefully to meet the different needs of pupils. Teachers ensure that pupils know what they will learn at the start of each lesson and help them check how successful they have been to help them become more involved with their learning. Good, thorough marking of work shows pupils what they must do to reach their challenging individual targets. Very good relationships help pupils feel secure so they enjoy learning and progress well. Behaviour is managed well so no

teaching time is lost, although pupils become restless if the teacher talks for too long. At times, teachers miss opportunities to reinforce skills. Well deployed teaching assistants provide skilled support, particularly for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good and pupils makes good progress through a well planned range of practical activities.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and adapted well to meet the needs of the pupils. It meets all statutory requirements.

Careful planning ensures that pupils receive tasks that challenge their individual learning needs. Well matched programmes of support based on information from the school's effective systems for monitoring progress ensure that all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, progress well. The basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are taught well and used in all subjects; for example, in science to write reports of investigations or measure distance travelled by different toy cars.

Pupils enjoy their responsibilities as school councillors, the Eco group and as play leaders. A wide range of activities helps pupils appreciate the importance of a healthy lifestyle, and they say, 'the school keeps us healthy and gives us healthy food'. They feel safe in school, and they learned about personal safety at the recent 'healthy and safe' day. Preparation for future economic well-being is developing well. The good variety of clubs is well attended, including sports, gardening, sewing, ICT and art.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school makes good provision for pupils' care, guidance and support. This enables all pupils to achieve well. The procedures to ensure child protection, health and safety systems and risk assessments are thorough, regularly reviewed and applied rigorously. Good arrangements exist to ensure that pupils settle into school quickly at the start of the Foundation Stage, or if they join part-way through the year. Good systems are in place to promote attendance including calls to parents, liaison with local support agencies and rewards for 100% attendance.

Staff make effective use of the school's good assessment systems to plan learning activities, monitor personal development and direct extra support where it is needed most. Parents and pupils particularly value the outstanding range of programmes of support provided to help particular pupils whose learning may be hindered by social, academic or behavioural difficulties. One parent commented, 'this has done wonders for the children'.

The school seeks to extend support facilities to families. There is a good partnership with parents, who feel the school is open and approachable and very responsive to requests for help. Staff know pupils and their families well.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. They are founded on the strength of the headteacher and her leadership team. The well informed governing body provide effective support and challenge for the headteacher. Good improvements in the quality of teaching, well matched programmes of support and thorough systems of recording what pupils can do have ensured that nearly all pupils make good progress.

The headteacher has provided a clear agenda for improvement focusing on higher standards, better rates of pupils' progress and good opportunities for pupils' personal development. The road to improvement has not been easy and has been hindered by obstacles outside the school's control, not least social factors and the high number of pupils who begin or leave school during the year. As a result, standards have remained stubbornly low. However, school leaders are committed to improvement and success. This is reflected in the good progress most pupils are making, the inclusive environment it provides and the increasingly effective role subject leaders have in ensuring that the focus on raising standards is maintained.

Parents value the improvements the school has made recently and the impact this has had on the pupils. Typically, parents are fulsome in praise for the way the head has brought the school on and they have welcomed the commitment to teach respect for others.

The school's self-evaluation is good quality. Priorities for further improvement are clearly articulated in the school's development plan, although the intended outcomes of actions are not as well defined as they could be. Although the issue of low standards remain from the previous inspection, all other issues have been dealt with. Coupled with the improvements the school leaders have made and the impact they are having on progress now, inspectors believe the school has strong capacity to improve even further. The school is therefore providing good value for money.

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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> | <b>School Overall</b> | <b>16-19</b> |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

### Overall effectiveness

|  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| <b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b> | 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

|  |   |    |
|--|---|----|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>   | 2 | NA |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 4 | 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

|   |   |    |
|---|---|----|
| <b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                           | 2 | NA |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 2 | NA |
| The behaviour of learners   | 2 | NA |
| The attendance of learners  | 4 | 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

|   |   |    |
|---|---|----|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>          | 2 | NA |
| <b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b> | 2 | NA |
| <b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>   | 2 | NA |

<sup>1</sup> 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**

|  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 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 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>  |     |
| 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 |
| <b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>   |     |
| 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 |
| <b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>  |     |
| 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 |
| <b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>                           |     |
| 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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The Children

Darwen St James' Church of England Primary School

St James' Crescent

Darwen

Lancashire

BB3 0EY

9 May 2006

Dear Children

As you know, Mrs McArthur and I visited your school recently. I am writing to you now to let you know what we found out. First of all though, I would like to say thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us both, and the way in which you freely gave your time to let us know your views. We are both very grateful to you all.

You belong to a good school. We know your national test results are not as high as other schools but you make good progress in your lessons; in fact, some of you make such good progress it is actually outstanding. What you need to do now is work hard with your teachers to turn this progress into higher standards.

We believe the good progress you make is down to the good teaching and support you receive, and the good way the grown-ups in the school care for and look after you. You have played a big part in this success too! We were very pleased to see your good attitudes and behaviour in and around school, very impressed with the way you spoke with us and delighted with your good manners. We could see you really enjoy coming to school, although a very small number of you are not here as much as you should be. This is a good place to be so those of you who are not here as often as you ought to be are missing out!

Miss Long and her team lead your school well. As well as asking her to make sure you do better in tests and help improve attendance, we have asked her to make the success criteria you are all so familiar with, clearer in the plans she and the governors have to make your school even better.

We know you are as proud of your school as the grown ups are. Keep working hard together!

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours faithfully

Mr Mark Williams, Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools