



Dalton St Michael's Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119493
LEA Lancashire
Inspection number 280572
Inspection dates 31 January 2006 to 1 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Anthony Calderbank

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Higher Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Dalton
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Wigan, Lancashire
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01257 462082
Number on roll	61	Fax number	01257 462082
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Maureen Faulkner
Date of previous inspection	1 November 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Gaynor Goodson

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 31 January 2006 - 1 February 2006	Inspection number 280572
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

St Michael's Church of England Primary is a small primary school. It is situated in the village of Dalton, near Wigan. Most of the pupils travel to the school from the Skelmersdale area. There are no children from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who have a free school meal is broadly average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to that found in most schools, but the number of pupils with a statement of special educational need is well above average. Two pupils are looked after children. The children's skills on entry to the school are average. The school has gained a Healthy School Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Michael's is a good school, where every child is known and valued as an individual. The pastoral care is of a high order. Pupils' personal development is good. The school has a very good partnership with parents and is very well regarded by them. However, attendance rates are poor because some parents take their children on holiday during term time. The school gives a high priority to its Christian mission which underpins its caring ethos.

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Teaching is good and the teaching of writing is a particular strength. However, as the school knows, pupils need more opportunities to solve mathematical problems. Pupils also need better help to understand what they need to do to improve their work. The school's curriculum is good and pupils make good progress. As a result, standards in English and mathematics are above average by the time they leave. The role of subject leadership is satisfactory but in need of further development. This is in hand. The headteacher and the governing body together provide the school with good leadership and management. Their evaluation of its effectiveness is accurate. They know what is needed to secure further improvement and have already put in place action plans for addressing the weaknesses. All staff and governors are firmly committed to improvement. The school has good capacity for continued improvement and provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils are provided with further opportunities to engage in scientific enquiry and to apply their number skills to the solving of mathematical problems.
- Continue to improve pupils' understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve their work.
- Further develop the role of subject leaders so that they become more effective in evaluating work in their subjects and in raising standards.
- Continue to improve arrangements to encourage better attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress throughout the school and all groups of pupils achieve well. Year groups are very small and pupils' attainment on entry varies from year to year. Overall, it is broadly average.

Children get off to a good start in the reception class and make good progress in learning. Standards in Year 2 are above average in reading, writing and mathematics.

At the end of Year 6, standards in English and mathematics are above average, and pupils achieve particularly well in writing. This is an improvement on the 2005 test results, which declined slightly in mathematics and science. The school is working to remove the weaknesses it has identified. Pupils are beginning to have more opportunities to make scientific investigations and to use their number skills to solve

mathematical problems and, as a result, their achievement is improving. The quality of the work seen in mathematics was better than that in most schools. Standards in science are broadly average.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are gifted or talented make good progress and achieve well because teachers are very aware of their individual strengths and weaknesses and plan well to meet their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. They are well motivated to learn and generally behave well. Throughout the school they are attentive in lessons, consider the needs of others and make good progress in working together in groups. Relationships are very good. Pupils get on well with each other and with staff who set a good example for them. They gain in confidence because their efforts and achievements are acknowledged and rewarded. There is a real sense of belonging to one big family. However, the attendance rate is well below the national average because some parents take their children on holiday during term time. Pupils are punctual to school and to lessons.

The pupils make a positive contribution to the school and to the life of the Church and the wider community. For instance, the school council has brought about improvements, such as the provision of a circular bench on the playground so that pupils can sit quietly if they so wish. Pupils learn to take responsibility by undertaking tasks that contribute to the smooth running of the school. They organise a tuck shop selling only healthy food and they act as playground buddies.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good with particular strength in their moral and social development. The school's Christian ethos helps pupils develop spiritually and to show respect for others. The school has close links with the Church and pupils regularly raise money for charities in support of those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils have a very good understanding of right and wrong. They learn about other faiths in religious education but too little is done to prepare them for life in our multicultural society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Individual teachers' strengths, for example, in music and physical education are used well. Planning is very effective and provides well for the mixed-age classes and pupils' different abilities. In all the lessons seen, teachers explained work clearly and maintained good order. They have good subject knowledge and high expectations of what they want the pupils to achieve. In numeracy, teachers are now placing a stronger emphasis on investigations and

solving of problems, but this has yet to become firmly established in teaching throughout the school.

Teachers have begun to set pupils personal targets but some individual children do not yet clearly understand what they need to do next in their work in order to improve. The teaching of writing is very good throughout the school and teachers are making good use of opportunities in other subjects such as history and science to develop pupils' writing skills further. Sometimes pupils are taught with older or younger pupils in their classes so that the work can meet their needs better. Well-trained classroom assistants make a valuable contribution to the good progress that pupils make and to the quality of their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum which meets the needs of all its pupils. The curriculum is enriched by well attended activities outside lessons and a good programme of educational visits and visitors. Throughout the school, the curriculum builds on pupils' knowledge along with their subject specific skills. In a science lesson, for example, the learners' knowledge and experimental skills were developed successfully as they discovered that the volume of air in given spaces can be measured by replacing it with water. There are particular strengths in music provision and the arrangements made for physical education to compensate for the school not having a hall.

A comprehensive programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education helps to ensure that pupils learn how to keep themselves healthy and safe and prepares them very well to become economically aware and make effective contributions to the community. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for vulnerable children is good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Taken overall, care guidance and support for pupils is good. The quality of pastoral care is outstanding. The adults know the pupils very well and have a very high level of concern for their well-being. They go out of their way to ensure pupils are safe and happy. Pupils confirm that they find the staff approachable and know their concerns will be listened to and acted on. Parents and carers particularly value the fact that the school is small enough for every child to be known and cared for. They are pleased with the open door policy and the friendly welcome they receive. The school is particularly good at meeting the needs of pupils who have not been successful in other schools. One pupil commented, 'I used to have difficulties at my other school, but now I'm getting better. I was really nervous when I came but then it felt like a dream'.

All the required policies and procedures to keep the children safe are in place and the school works very closely with other agencies to ensure that pupils receive any further help they might need.

Whole school systems for assessing pupils' attainment and tracking their progress are effective and individuals who need extra help are quickly identified and supported well. The school should continue to improve pupils' understanding of what they have to do next in order to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher, staff and governors are determined to improve pupils' achievement and they plan carefully how to do so. For example, the high standards in writing are the result of a purposeful drive to raise standards. The school's evaluation of its effectiveness is accurate. This is due to a number of factors. The school has put in place rigorous systems for assessing pupils' attainment, keeping track of their progress and identifying areas for development. Senior staff keep a close eye on the quality of teaching. Governors and parents are involved and consulted. As a result, development planning is securely based. Subject leaders are taking a more proactive role in developing their areas but they are not yet fully effective in evaluating work in their subjects and in raising standards.

The school is supported effectively by a very well organised governing body, very ably led. Governors have a high level of involvement in the school's life and work alongside the staff to provide the very best for every pupil. Good use is made of individual strengths of staff. The chair is skilled in analysing and interpreting data and provides such information annually to the governing body.

The school has improved well in the six years since the last inspection. Standards have risen and all the key issues have been tackled.

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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	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

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?	2	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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Dalton St Michael's Church of England

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2 February 2006

Dear Children

Now that I have finished inspecting your school I am writing to let you know what I think. First of all, thank you very much for making me so welcome. It was a delight to meet you all. I enjoyed talking to you and seeing your lessons. I am particularly grateful to those of you who came to tell me about the work you do and what you think of your school. I especially enjoyed helping the reception children to make 'honey biscuits' and thought that they tasted delightful!

Yours is a good school and you do well. By the time you reach Year 6 you have learned a lot, reaching standards in English and maths that are better than lots of schools. You do, however, need more help in understanding how well you are doing and what you must do next to improve. Teachers work hard to give you interesting and enjoyable lessons. They run lots of clubs, take you on visits and invite interesting visitors to talk to you. I could see that you want to learn and you enjoy school and the staff look after you very well. You are well behaved and polite. I was pleased to see that you learn how to keep safe and healthy. I have asked your teachers to make sure that they continue to provide you with opportunities to do practical work in science and to use your number skills to solve maths problems.

Your school is led well by your headteacher and other members of staff are giving her lots of help to make your school even better. I want the school to continue to train teachers to be excellent subject leaders so that everything you learn is interesting and taught as well as possible.

Your school is run well and I am sure that Mrs Goodson, the teachers, and the governors will carry on working hard to make it better still. I have asked them to work with your parents to make sure you all come to school every day so that you can take advantage of the good quality of education provided.

Do keep on working hard and enjoying school.

Yours faithfully
Tony Calderbank
Additional Inspector