

St Stephen and All Martyrs' CofE School, Lever Bridge

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105217
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	287162
Inspection dates	23–24 January 2008
Reporting inspector	David Halford

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	168
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Ashworth
Headteacher	Mr Michael Cummins
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2002
School address	Radcliffe Road Bolton Lancashire BL2 1NZ
Telephone number	01204 333155
Fax number	01204 333156

Age group	5-11
Inspection dates	23–24 January 2008
Inspection number	287162

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The school was inspected by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized primary school serves an area of mixed housing. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is below average, and none are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school has the Investor in People award and has recently gained first prize in a national science competition sponsored by Rolls Royce. The school has experienced some significant disruption to staffing in recent years, including at leadership level and this position continues.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education overall. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and the school cares for and supports its pupils well. Parents views are summed up by comments such as, 'The school takes time to get to know every child. They are taught respect and care for themselves and others, and this is modelled by all the staff.'

Children begin the Reception Year with skills which are below national expectations, particularly in communication skills and aspects of mathematical development. They make good progress while in Reception and the majority enter Year 1 with skills which are broadly in line with expectations. By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average and pupils' achievement throughout the school is satisfactory. Progress across different year groups is uneven, however. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Some teaching is good but there are inconsistencies in quality which contribute to the uneven progress. Some pupils, notably the higher attaining ones, do not always achieve as well as they should. The newly established assessment systems provide good information for teachers to use to plan more appropriate work for pupils in the future, but they are not yet being fully utilised to ensure all pupils, particularly higher attainers, are sufficiently challenged. The marking of pupils' work is not consistent and not all informs them how they can improve their work. The curriculum is satisfactory overall and is supplemented by a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

Pupils enjoy school. Their behaviour and attendance are good. Pupils work well with each other and know how to keep healthy and safe. They value the good quality of pastoral care provided for them. There are good links with the community.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Governors give good support and challenge to the school. They receive detailed data about the pupils' performance and understand it well. They manage the school's financial position effectively. The headteacher and senior leaders have an appropriately accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and a clear grasp of what is needed to raise pupils' achievement. Significant new initiatives are now in place, but as yet, it is too early to see the full impact of those new developments in pupils' standards. Currently, the school demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve and satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in all areas of learning while in Reception because of the good teaching and support which they receive. Effective induction procedures ensure that they settle quickly and happily into school routines and develop positive relationships. All children are catered for well in secure, bright and attractive accommodation which promotes all areas of the curriculum. Praise is used well to reward children's success and as a result, they gain increased levels of confidence and independence. Their behaviour is good. Children show positive attitudes to learning because of the wide range of practical activities that engage their interest. Learning is also effective in the well resourced outside play area. Planning and assessment systems are thorough and well matched to children's needs. Leadership and management are good and staff work effectively as a team. Relationships with parents are positive and parents are pleased by the information they receive about the progress their children make.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science through improving the quality and consistency of teaching and learning.
- Ensure the work planned offers sufficient challenge to all pupils, particularly the higher attainers.
- Ensure that all marking of pupils' work tells them what they need to do to improve.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory throughout the school. In 2007, pupils' standards in the national tests and assessments at Key Stage 1 were below average and these pupils made satisfactory progress throughout Years 1 and 2. Results in the tests at the end of Key Stage 2 were broadly average, representing satisfactory progress overall for the pupils involved. Currently, progress throughout Years 1 to 6 is also satisfactory and standards are broadly in line with national expectations. In recent years, Key Stage 2 pupils have made better progress in English than in mathematics and science. This is noticeable in the 2007 test results, where a good proportion gained the higher level in English, but too few gained the higher level in mathematics and science. Pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are supported well and make good progress because of the specific focus on meeting their individual needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school. This is reflected in their enthusiasm in lessons, their good behaviour, relationships, attitudes and attendance and the satisfactory development of their basic skills. The school works hard to ensure that its staff and pupils work as a supportive and cooperative community. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and is woven into every aspect of school life. The celebration of festivals and traditions from a range of cultures enable pupils to understand beliefs and customs different to their own. There are 'buddy' and peer mediation systems in school which help pupils learn valuable social skills. Pupils are proud to take on roles and responsibilities in school. In particular, as members of the school council, they know their views are taken into account. Through their work on the council, pupils learn skills which help prepare them for adult life. Pupils have an increasing understanding of the importance of healthy living and staying safe. The school is currently working towards the award of Healthy School status. The school has good links with its local community which, in turn, supports the school well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Whilst teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, the impact of teaching on pupils' learning has resulted in uneven progress in recent years. Whilst this situation is improving, the quality of teaching is not yet consistent enough to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress.

In lessons where teaching is now good, effective planning means that pupils are clear about what is expected of them and they are challenged to learn. Teachers' questioning is precise and pupils are given time to answer thoughtfully. Pupils' behaviour is managed well and experienced teaching assistants support them effectively. As a result of this good teaching, pupils make good progress. Where the impact of teaching on learning is satisfactory, pupils of differing abilities undertake the same tasks and higher attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently and consistently. As a result, progress is slower than it should be because the most able pupils do not always make the progress they are capable of and some lower attaining pupils struggle with tasks which are too demanding.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has recently undertaken substantial work to link into the principles of a particular programme of learning for primary pupils. The impact of this is that a whole-school planning programme is in place and this contributes well to independent learning opportunities and self-assessment. This helps to ensure that learning is relevant to pupils' interests and lives. There are also greater and more effective links between the learning in different subjects. The information and communication technology curriculum has a central place and is well supported by a good range of resources. This is supplemented by the opportunity for pupils to make a choice from a limited range of activities on one afternoon each week. The pupils value this chance to select a particular topic to study over a set period of lessons. Visits, visitors and a good range of out-of-school clubs and activities help to support pupils' learning. Whilst these new initiatives look promising, curriculum development is at a very early stage and has not yet been evaluated fully for its contribution to raising standards and improving pupils' achievement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Whilst provision for pupils' care and welfare are good, procedures for monitoring pupils' academic guidance are satisfactory. Procedures are in place to safeguard pupils' well-being and to promote their health and safety. There are robust systems for the identification and support of vulnerable pupils. There is good provision to support pupils' personal, social and health education. A good system to record and track pupils' progress has been introduced recently so that teachers are now gaining a better understanding about what pupils know and can do. Learners also are aware of their group and class targets that have been set to improve standards, but these systems are not yet incorporated fully into school procedures. There are examples of high quality marking of pupils' work which gives them a clear understanding of what to do next to improve. Not all marking is of this quality.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has a clear picture of the current satisfactory position and is taking firm steps to promote improvement. A recently enhanced senior leadership team are working with great enthusiasm and skill to support the headteacher's vision. They are making effective use of an active support programme with the local authority. The work undertaken to this point is good. Assessment, monitoring and evaluating procedures are currently thorough but too new to be having the full impact on pupils' standards. As a result, some groups of pupils do not yet achieve

as well as they should. Governors are knowledgeable about the school and have made good decisions to ensure that the school has been managed as effectively as possible during the period of instability. They are well informed, receiving good quality data which they use well, and are managing the school's finances prudently.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of St Stephen and All Martyrs' C of E School, Lever Bridge

BL2 1NZ

My colleague and I really enjoyed our recent visit to your school. Thank you very much for your very warm welcome and for looking after us so well. You were very helpful in lessons when we asked you to explain what you were doing and also very friendly around the school. Particular thanks should go to the members of the school council who helped us to understand why it is that you enjoy your school so much. We think that your school is satisfactory and it has some good elements.

We know that your school cares for you well and makes sure that you can all join in fully with the work which is prepared for you. Your school works well with many agencies to ensure your care and support. All the adults who support you in your lessons impressed us. We know that you enjoy yourselves in school and look forward to taking part in a wide range of activities, especially those lessons where you get the chance to investigate things. Overall, we think you all try very hard to make your school community a very happy and secure place.

We also hope that our visit will help your school to improve. We are asking your teachers to do three things. Firstly, to ensure that their teaching always makes you do your best work and achieve as well as you can. Secondly, to try to make sure that those boys and girls who learn easily are always made to think hard about the work they are given and lastly, that when your teachers mark your work they let you know what you need to do to improve it.

Thank you once again for all your help when we made our visit to you. We send you all our very best wishes for the future. We do hope that you continue to enjoy learning as much as you do at the moment.