

St Peter's Smithills Dean CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105228
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	287166
Inspection date	11 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Suzi Clipson-Boyles HMI

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	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	214
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Paul Hardingham
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Lancashire
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2002
School address	Limefield Road Smithills Bolton Lancashire BL1 6LA
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This is an average-sized primary school. It is situated in a socially advantaged residential area on the rural outskirts of Bolton. The majority of children are of White British heritage and around 7% are from several other ethnic backgrounds. Most live locally in owner-occupied housing. The number of children eligible for free school meals is extremely low. The percentage of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements, is well below the national average. The school's Church of England status has a strong influence on its everyday mission and ethos. The school buildings are also shared with the church and are used most evenings for community activities. A church service takes place in the school hall each Sunday.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school assesses its own performance too modestly as satisfactory - this inspection judges it to be a good school. It provides quality education and care that lead to good progress for the children. At the start of the Foundation Stage, standards are around national expectations. Provision here is good and the children receive an accelerated start to their education in school during this first year. By the end of Year 6 standards are good; they are above the national averages overall, with mathematics and science well ahead. All groups of learners achieve well, although some of the more able children could be stretched even further in certain classes. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do exceptionally well during their time here.

These good achievements are due to the headteacher's effective leadership and management, and a highly committed team of staff and governors. The headteacher runs the school efficiently and effectively. She has extremely high expectations of children and adults alike but is also supportive and considerate in the way she manages change. Good learning is a high priority and so is good behaviour. Much work has been done during the past year to improve behaviour, particularly in the playground. New approaches introduced throughout the school have been extremely effective and the orderly, happy and caring atmosphere helps all children to achieve well.

Children enjoy coming to school very much and their attendance is exceptionally high. Teaching is good overall so children are motivated to learn. Lessons provide different tasks for different abilities, but they do not always extend the learning to the maximum capacity for some children. Teachers and teaching assistants are caring and supportive in the way they help classes to learn. As a result children are confident to express ideas and opinions without fear of rejection. However, not all teachers give children opportunities to assess their own work in order to think about what they might do better next time.

The school is meticulous about safety. As well as providing a safe environment, the school helps children to develop a good awareness of how to keep safe. There are very few incidents of bullying or racism. This is because the school helps children to behave well towards one another. From the time they start in the Foundation Stage they are taught to understand the relationship between behaviour and safety and how to take responsibility for their own actions. On the rare occasions when problems do arise, they are dealt with swiftly through a clear framework of sanctions. The children therefore feel that school is a safe and secure environment.

The school provides satisfactory opportunities for children to learn about healthy lifestyles. They are aware of the importance of healthy snacks, nutritious lunches and drinking water. However, overall, children's understanding in this area, and particularly about physical fitness, is not as developed as it could be. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They learn skills that will contribute considerably towards their future economic well-being. They work cooperatively and are confident to make decisions. The school council has influenced school improvements, for instance the purchase of picnic tables for the field. Opportunities to develop learning about the world of work start early; for example, Year 1 children were buying and selling in a clothes store! Special school responsibilities such as Playground Pals are taken very seriously. In the wider community, children are keen to raise money for local and international charities and take part in the organisation of this. They are

particularly involved in links to a school in Kenya. The school provides a good range of after-school clubs and the children and most parents appreciate these greatly.

What the school should do to improve further

- Include specific learning criteria in lesson plans so that rates of progress are maximised for more able children in all classes.
- Ensure that all children are involved in everyday assessment of their own work to help them identify next small steps for improvement.
- Improve children's understanding of healthy lifestyles.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children make good progress overall during their time here and standards are above the national averages by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make significantly better progress than those nationally. Standards are good in all National Curriculum subjects. Geography is particularly strong and was rewarded with the Primary Geography Quality Mark Silver Award last year.

When they start in the Foundation Stage, children's levels of established skills vary in range but overall they are in line with national expectations for their age. During the year they make rapid gains and by the start of Year 1 they are slightly ahead of the national expectations and are well ahead of similar schools in the local authority. They continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1. Teacher assessments and the work in children's books show that by the end of Year 2 they are further ahead of the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. The standards reached in reading are outstanding. By the end of Year 6 children continue to make good overall progress though this varies between classes. Gains in mathematics and science are particularly high and well ahead of the national averages. However, progress in English is only just above average because fewer children are reaching the higher levels. There are signs that this is slowly improving.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development and well-being are good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. At the start of the Foundation Stage some children need considerable help in learning how to behave appropriately. They respond well to the teaching and structured guidance they receive and make good progress socially. Older children demonstrate that they know how to behave well and why this is important. They are considerate towards one another, and work cooperatively in pairs and groups. The new arrangements and equipment at playtimes have resulted in much better behaviour outside. Children understand what is expected of them and they like the fact that there are clear rules and sanctions. They have positive attitudes to learning, responding enthusiastically in lessons. They are keen to answer questions, and are able to discuss issues sensibly. Attendance is outstanding. Pupils are conscious of safety issues and know how to stay safe. Their understanding of health issues is satisfactory. The staff often take children out of school on visits, including a weekend residential, because they can be trusted to behave sensibly and safely. Children go about their special jobs in school with pride. For example, older children act as Playground Pals to the younger ones at break times, teaching new games and sharing out equipment. Many children are involved in the many community activities organised in school by the church.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There is some variation in the quality of teaching and this has been identified accurately in the headteacher's own classroom observations. However, teaching and learning are good overall. In the Foundation Stage, different areas of learning are linked together to make the learning more fun. Children often go outside to learn. Their progress is carefully assessed through close observation. Throughout the rest of the school teachers plan lessons carefully and use stimulating resources to capture the children's interest. They are supportive and encourage the children to participate, so there are high levels of motivation. Groups are often given slightly different tasks according to their learning needs. However, these tasks are not always designed around extending the learning to a higher level. Different approaches are also used to cater for different learning needs; for example, using music to create a calming atmosphere, or talking in pairs to explore thinking skills. New equipment for information and communications technology (ICT) has been purchased this year and this is clearly making a difference. Teachers talked enthusiastically about the effect that the interactive whiteboards have had on their lessons. All teachers use every opportunity to develop children's reading skills in lessons. Teaching assistants make a positive difference to children's learning because they are given clear and constructive tasks at all times. Some aspects of the teaching are not as effective; for example when children sit for too long on the carpet they become restless and opportunities for active learning are reduced.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is balanced and fulfils statutory requirements. In the Foundation Stage, there is a good balance between activities, and children enjoy learning indoors and out. Teachers frequently arrange visitors to school to enrich the learning experience; for example, a local member of the church came to talk to Year 6 about his experiences as an evacuee. The range of educational visits out of school is also good and the children talked enthusiastically about how these help them to remember what they are learning. Year 4 children had recently been to Manchester Airport. That experience clearly helped their understanding of complex issues about building a new runway in a geography lesson during the inspection. Teachers often make links between different subjects, such as art, science and mathematics in symmetrical art work of mini-beasts. The school spends a significant sum of money to support children with free instrumental lessons. It also offers a good range of after-school clubs, some of which are free.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The high levels of staff commitment ensure that children are provided with a safe and secure environment within which to learn. Before children start in the Foundation Stage, staff work closely with parents and early years settings to ensure that the children settle in quickly and happily. Throughout the school, health and safety systems are rigorous and regular checks take place. The arrangements for safeguarding children who may be at risk fulfil statutory requirements. Teachers and teaching assistants provide good support and guidance for children's academic progress during lessons. The outstanding support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has been recognised by the Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark Award. Teachers

mark children's work conscientiously and give positive comments, but guidance on next steps for improvement and the correction of basic errors are inconsistent. Some teachers involve the children in assessing their own work, but there is no whole school approach to this important aspect of learning. Arrangements for the transfer to high school have been improved this year and parents are now much happier with these.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher is scrupulous in her attention to detail. She has managed considerable changes during the last year and has done this with great skill and sensitivity. She has the positive support of children, staff, governors and parents and consults them appropriately on the way that the school needs to move forward. She is extremely well supported by the deputy headteacher and staff. Changes to roles and responsibilities have been highly effective. Staff have worked in teams to develop new initiatives and there is clear evidence that these have had a considerable impact. The new ICT suite has led to a significant rise in standards particularly in Key Stage 1. The new system of tracking children's individual progress is still developing, but staff are already using this information to help target specific groups. The capacity for continued improvement is excellent, based on the previous year's track record. Pupil and parent surveys have already shown a marked improvement on last year's feedback. The governing body is very supportive. They are not afraid to act as 'critical friends' because relationships are constructive, but they are aware that sometimes they do not sufficiently challenge the work of the school. Communication with parents is good and the questionnaires returned for the inspection were overwhelmingly positive and appreciative of the work of the school.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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 behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	2

The quality of provision

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

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I came to inspect your school. I enjoyed my day with you because everyone was so friendly and helpful. Please thank your parents for taking the time to fill out the questionnaires for me - what a lot I received! I would also like to say a special thank you to the School Council. You gave me useful information while we ate our lunch together and toured the playground.

Your headteacher, staff and governors think that your school gives you a satisfactory education but I disagree. St Peter's Smithills Dean CE School gives you a good education. Here are some of the things that make it good:

- the children in the Foundation Stage get a good start because their learning is fun. They quickly learn how to behave more sensibly
- during your time at school you make good progress. By the end of Year 6 the school's results are higher than in many other schools
- you work well in all subjects and are particularly good at geography
- the teachers use lots of good ideas to make the learning fun. They also take you on lots of visits to help you learn more. Sometimes they invite special people into school to make lessons more interesting
- the adults take extremely good care of you and the school is safe
- your behaviour has improved a lot this year. You also have very good attitudes to learning and are keen to work hard
- the headteacher is very good at helping the school to keep on improving. For example you have a new ICT suite and interactive whiteboards
- those of you who need extra help with your learning make excellent progress
- your attendance is the very best I have seen this year!

I have asked Mrs Lancashire to work with you and the teachers on certain things next year that will help the school to improve further. First of all, in your lessons the teachers will be giving some of you more to learn so that you make faster progress - especially in English. Secondly, the teachers will be giving you more time to look at how well you have done each piece of work. This will help you to understand better the small changes you need to make next time so that your work keeps improving. Finally, the teachers will be helping you learn more about how to stay healthy.

You are such a hard-working team, and I know that you are all eager to do your best. I hope that my report will help you focus on the right things. I wish you every success for a happy future.