



Westhead Lathom St James' Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119377
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 291402
Inspection dates 22–23 February 2007
Reporting inspector Penny Parrish

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	School Lane
School category	Voluntary controlled		Westhead, Ormskirk
Age range of pupils	4–11		Lancashire, L40 6HL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01695 574078
Number on roll (school)	68	Fax number	01695 574078
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Anne Waterhouse
		Headteacher	Mrs Alison Albion
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school is situated near the market town of Ormskirk. Pupils are taught in three mixed age classes. The proportion of those with learning difficulties and disabilities is average, although the number with a statement of special educational need is above average. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is well below average. Almost all pupils are of White British background; a small number are from a minority ethnic background. All have English as their home language.

Parents can pay for their children to attend a Breakfast Club or the extended provision for after-school care. The extended provision has been inspected separately and the outcomes are available in a separate report.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Westhead Lathom St James is a good school. Parents praise its work highly and are very confident of the good care provided for their children. One parent commented, reflecting the views of many, 'The school may be small but its performance is immense'. The headteacher provides dynamic leadership and, with the staff team, a strong commitment to the continuous improvement of the school. Teaching is good, overall, and sometimes outstanding. A lively curriculum of good quality and excellent relationships make sure that children enjoy learning. Pupils achieve well, make good progress and standards are above average.

Most children make good progress and achieve well in the Reception Year, particularly in personal and social development and in speaking and listening, providing a good foundation for future learning. The goals set nationally for the end of Reception are exceeded. By the end of Year 2, standards are usually above average. Although most pupils reach the level expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics, few reach higher levels. In Year 6, test results in 2006 confirmed above average standards and the good progress of most pupils in English, mathematics and science. A review of current work shows that although an above average number of pupils reach higher levels in science, the more able could achieve more in writing and mathematics. The school is aware that the pace of progress in writing across the school could be improved. Staff have been working to improve calculations and problem-solving in mathematics but there is more to be done to improve the progress of the more able pupils.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils know they are cared for exceptionally well, feel very safe in school and show a good understanding of the needs of others. They clearly understand what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and how to keep themselves safe. Behaviour is excellent. They contribute very well to the school through carrying out various responsibilities; such as, being representatives on the school council and, for some of the older pupils, reporting to governors on their work. They share enthusiastically in local events, such as the village carnival, developing a strong sense of belonging to the local community. They enjoy finding out about different places, faiths and cultures. The pupils' exceptionally good social skills, their above average attainment in the basic skills and their good attendance put them in a good position for future economic well-being.

The headteacher, staff and governors have a clear and realistic view of the school's strengths and where it might get better. The success of good improvements made since the last inspection shows that the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by developing a more precise awareness of pupils' differing needs
- Ensure that teachers' planning includes sufficient challenge for the more able pupils to enable them to achieve consistently well

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and standards are generally above average by the end of Year 6. Attainment on entry is broadly average but varies year by year. Because of the small number of pupils in each year group, standards fluctuate from year to year and comparisons with national figures are not always appropriate. Recent improvements in the teaching of reading mean that standards are consolidating at above average levels again after a fallback in Year 2 in 2006. Similarly, improvements in the teaching of letter-sounds are leading to improved progress in writing in Reception and Years 1 and 2. Although standards are above average overall by Year 6, there is more to be done to challenge the more able pupils in English and mathematics. Results are consistently above average in science by the end of Year 6 because good provision for investigation work ensures good achievement. The school provides well for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities; they achieve well and many reach broadly average standards by Year 6. There are no significant differences in the achievement of girls and boys. Standards in information and communication technology are above average, showing good improvement since the last inspection.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well being are outstanding. The school is justly proud of its family atmosphere and relationships are excellent. Pupils are self-assured, articulate and care for each other well. Behaviour is outstanding, enabling an active and lively curriculum, complete with many visits and visitors, to promote pupils' personal development. Attendance is above average. Pupils really enjoy all aspects of school; for example, they find it hard to choose a favourite subject. Older pupils set a good example and support younger ones well. The 'friendship stop' bench on the playground is checked by the older pupils, with help readily provided for anyone feeling lonely or sad. Open discussions about feelings and moods enable pupils to understand their own thoughts and become sensitive to the feelings of others. One parent described the school as 'warm and loving'. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally good. There are many examples daily. Spiritual development is supported by good links with the local church, for example, and a good understanding of the Christian way of life exemplified through the school prayer. Pupils gain a good awareness of other cultures through learning about other world faiths. Visitors, such as an African story teller, expand their understanding and enjoyment in learning. Pupils are well aware of safe practices and a healthy lifestyle. They contribute to improvements in the school community through the school council, where members have considered the school's provision in detail through the national agenda of 'Every Child Matters'. The pupils' excellent personal and social skills, together with good basic academic skills, provide a very good basis for their future economic well-being. They work readily and easily in pairs or groups, in and beyond lessons, including mixed-age groups planning to make a profit for school funds from a modest outlay.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are generally lively and stimulating so that pupils are interested and want to learn. Occasionally, teaching is outstanding; the very good subject knowledge of the teacher promotes high interest and involvement for all pupils at the right level so that they learn a lot in a short time and remember it well. All teachers have elements of this standard of work in some lessons; where planning is usually well matched to pupils' differing learning needs and the objectives for the different parts of the lesson are used well, this high quality is sustained throughout. The pace of lessons is generally brisk so that pupils are able to concentrate well, work hard and progress quickly. In some lessons, the pace of teaching slows, work is not planned so well to suit pupils' differing needs and, consequently, progress is less rapid. This affects the more able pupils most of all, particularly when they are in the oldest age group in the class. While teachers are well informed on pupils' overall progress and have set up systems of targets for learning, pupils themselves do not understand clearly enough their successes and areas for development. This applies to writing especially, where marking tends to lack clarity and pupils are unsure of their current focus for improvement. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers to support pupils' learning; their work is particularly effective in supporting the good progress of those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced and well supported by an interesting range of enrichment activities of good quality. Pupils' academic development is well provided for and the statutory curriculum is supplemented well by extra learning opportunities; for example, to learn Spanish or to play a musical instrument. Staff work hard to make sure that the curriculum is not limited by the restricted size of the accommodation. The mobile suite of laptop computers is used well in subjects across the curriculum. The recently opened 'studio', or hall within a demountable building on the school playground, now ensures that physical education is up to the standard expected nationally, in all weathers. The pupils' above average skills in speaking and listening and their exceptionally good personal and social development are sustained and developed well across the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Excellent relationships throughout the school community help pupils to settle quickly, to feel appreciated and to learn with confidence. The school is exceptionally supportive on a personal level and goes to considerable trouble to help resolve any individual or family problems that arise. Professional help is sought without delay from outside

agencies when necessary, supplementing the school's provision well for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Good systems for child protection and safeguarding are in place and used diligently where necessary. Clear records are kept of pupils' assessment data year on year. These are used well to target extra support where needed and to lead improvements in the school's provision. They are not always supplemented well enough with interim assessments in order to provide a close guide to pupils' learning needs. Good systems have been recently introduced for checking and guiding pupils' reading skills and a satisfactory system is in place for mathematics. Although plans are in hand, there is no similar system for writing. This limits the information available to help the school improve pupils' standards in writing. Weaknesses in pupils' understanding of their own learning, sometimes limits their rate of progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The dynamic and committed leadership of the headteacher gives the school a clear direction. Self-evaluation is largely accurate and the school is clearly focused on moving forward. Under the energetic leadership of the headteacher, the staff and governors have had considerable success in extending and adapting the indoor and outdoor facilities of the school. Strategies to improve pupils' progress are not always sufficiently precise. When monitoring teaching and learning, for example, areas for development are not always sufficiently clearly identified.

Governance is supportive and challenging. Governors offer considerable expertise and are fully involved in the life of the school. Pupils in Year 6 who presented examples of their work to the governing body said they were not nervous because they knew them well and 'feel comfortable around them'.

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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	2
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	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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.

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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Westhead Lathom St James' Church of England Primary School

School Lane

Westhead

Ormskirk

Lancashire

L40 6HL

26 February 2007

Dear Children

Thank you for helping me to feel so welcome in your school. It was a delight and privilege for me to see how well you are doing. I was very pleased to see how beautifully you behave and look after each other. One of your parents told me that your school is a very important and happy part of your lives and I think she is right.

The teachers and staff work very hard to help you to learn in many different ways. They are patient and very kind so it is not surprising that so many of you told me you liked being at school. I found that teaching is good and you learn well. Everyone gets on with their work and tries to do their best. Lessons are interesting and I know you enjoy them. You have visits out of school to help you to learn more; I know the older children look forward to all the activities included in the residential stays at Min-y-don in North Wales each year. Visitors to school, such as Mis'oshi, help you to learn more about other places and people, and really inspire you to write well. The school council helps to improve the school in important ways. I enjoyed attending the meeting and tasting the tropical fruit afterwards with Mrs Waterhouse

I have asked Mrs Albion and all your teachers and governors to help you to become even better in your work by improving your writing. I know you will play your part well by doing your best. I have also suggested that some of you who find your work quite easy at times might be helped to do even better by being given a greater challenge. This will be your chance to really shine!

I wish you and your teachers well as you work to make your good school even better.

With very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Penny Parrish

School inspector