



Simonstone St Peter's Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119428
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 291415
Inspection dates 8–9 March 2007
Reporting inspector Eric Jackson

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 aided		Simonstone, Burnley
Age range of pupils	4–11		Lancashire, BB12 7HR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01282 771147
Number on roll (school)	117	Fax number	01282 774309
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr John Aizlewood
		Headteacher	Mr Ian Hopkins
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school that serves a wide and largely favourable area socio-economically. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. Almost all pupils are White British, with a very small number of pupils of mixed or Asian heritage. All the pupils speak English. There is before and after school care, inspected in 2005 (report available in school). Extensive building improvements have been made recently. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2007.

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 education with some good features. This is a lower overall judgement than the school's self-evaluation suggests. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Good partnerships with other local schools and the local authority add value to the school's work. The school is popular, often oversubscribed, and highly thought of by parents. One summed up most others' views in writing, 'This is an excellent school which has given our child a first class primary education.' There is a positive atmosphere of community and shared purpose throughout the day. Pupils really enjoy being here, behave outstandingly, and make good progress in learning how to live healthily and keep themselves safe. They get on well together, and eagerly fulfil tasks and duties around school. The school's Christian mission is evident in the pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, illustrated well in movingly sung hymns in assembly.

Standards overall are above average by the end of Year 6. In national tests in 2006 in English, mathematics and science the school met its targets at expected levels, but missed them at higher levels in all three subjects. These results reflect a falling trend in pupils' achievement by the end of Key Stage 2 compared to similar pupils nationally, particularly in writing and mathematics. Children make good progress in Reception from above average levels at entry, with very good progress in reading. They make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and achieved above average standards in national tests in Year 2 in 2006, especially in reading. Fewer Year 2 pupils than average reached higher than expected levels in writing. The school's records show periods of slow progress in the middle years in the recent past. Now, pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 3 and 4, and good progress in Years 5 and 6.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with good features. Learning is often good or better in Reception and Years 5 and 6. The curriculum is sound, and is well-enriched by after-school activities, visits and visitors. The staff care for the pupils well, and their support and guidance for their learning are satisfactory. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well to make good progress.

Leadership and management are satisfactory but the school's capacity to improve is good. The new headteacher has already developed a clear vision for the school's development, working closely with the recently appointed assistant headteacher. While immediate priorities for improvement have been correctly identified, precise plans with measurable outcomes for the pupils have yet to be drawn up. Parents and governors say that they are pleased with the start made by the new leadership team. Governors are very supportive, working in close partnership with parents and the staff, and provide satisfactory challenge to the school's leadership.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils achieve the highest level they are capable of in English, especially writing, and in mathematics.

- Draw up precise and measurable improvement plans that focus directly on better outcomes for pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards overall are above average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Unusually, girls achieved lower levels than boys last year, especially in writing. The school feels that having a significantly higher proportion of boys than girls in some year groups affects girls' progress adversely. Currently, there is no disparity between boys' and girls' progress. The results for Year 6 in 2006 reflect a falling trend in pupils' achievement by the end of Key Stage 2 compared to similar pupils nationally, particularly in writing and mathematics. The school's records show some inadequate progress in the middle of the school in recent years, with some but not all lost ground made up in Years 5 and 6. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and achieved above average standards in national tests in Year 2 in 2006, especially in reading. Fewer Year 2 pupils than average reached higher than expected levels in writing. Currently, pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 3 and 4, and good progress in Years 5 and 6. This includes the small number of pupils of mixed or Asian heritage. Children make good progress in Reception from above average levels at entry, with very good progress in reading, supported well by parents.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good, and their well-being is promoted successfully, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These are strengths that have been maintained since the last inspection. Parents write convincingly of how their children 'grow in confidence' and 'thrive on the broad range of educational challenges' in Reception. Older pupils care for the youngest, and there is a strong feeling of the school being safely organised as a well-run family. Pupils' very good attendance testifies to their enjoyment of their learning, and older pupils lead the school community well. The school has achieved national Healthy School status and two elements of the local authority's more comprehensive award. Pupils understand and live these messages in their healthy diets and love of physical exercise, underlined by the school's display of sporting trophies. Pupils take full advantage of the school grounds that are very well-equipped for active and vigorous but safe play. The underlying spirituality of the school's work flowers in thoughtful assemblies and rich, sincere singing of a range of powerful hymns. Here, a parent's view that, 'Our children's time at school is an absolute joy,' is in full evidence. Most pupils leave well-equipped for the next stage of their lives, but recently a few have not reached the highest level they were capable of in basic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good and occasionally outstanding features. The staff prepare the pupils for learning well, helping them to develop effective work habits, to manage themselves in class, behave well, and cooperate with each other. Pupils respond effectively, enjoying their work and generally getting on with it conscientiously. Teachers plan lessons securely, and pupils generally have work that challenges them to improve. In Reception and Years 5 and 6, this challenge is often demanding but exciting. This leads to good and sometimes better progress in learning. For example, children in Reception have a veterinary role play area, and a nurse came to show them many of the medical instruments used to check where there might be problems. This brought their learning alive. Where teaching is satisfactory, mainly in the middle years, pupils make generally adequate progress but do not do as well as needed in writing to lift standards sufficiently. During the inspection there was no unsatisfactory teaching, although there is evidence of slow progress in the past for the current Year 5 and 6 pupils. The few pupils identified with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because the support they receive is specifically focused to their needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets requirements. The staff have adequate knowledge of the subjects taught, and there is good enrichment in the arts, sport and music. A teacher from the local authority music service provides excellent support for pupils' musical development. There are plans to review the curriculum against recent national guidance, and this is timely, particularly to provide the right challenge for potential high attaining pupils in writing and mathematics.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, support and guidance are satisfactory overall. Care is good, and pupils are well looked after and safe so that they can enjoy their time in school without anxiety. For example, great care is taken when escorting the pupils across the road to the church hall for music, assembly and physical education. All required child protection and safeguarding procedures are in place. Support and guidance for pupils' personal development are good, but for their academic development they are satisfactory. Teachers' marking and assessment of pupils' progress are satisfactory but variable. In the best examples, marking evaluates for pupils where they have done well and points out how they could improve. In less helpful cases it is not clear what is good in the work and how the pupil might improve. New target setting procedures are beginning to inform pupils and staff better about progress and achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Issues from the last inspection have been successfully dealt with, and there have been major improvements to the accommodation, with further development planned. The school runs smoothly, and there are clear and safe procedures for its operation. The new management team has made an effective start with the support of other staff, governors and parents, and there is an air of confidence and optimism about the school. Governors fulfil their roles satisfactorily, providing good support and giving their time willingly. While the school's written self-evaluation provides a comprehensive and satisfactory overview, it lacks sufficient clarity and sharpness to provide a secure basis for school improvement. The headteacher has already set out his immediate vision for improvement from his own analysis, and this is focused on the right priorities to raise standards and improve the quality of education. There is clear support from other staff, governors and parents for this approach.

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

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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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	3
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

Simonstone St Peter's Church of England Primary School

School Lane

Simonstone

Burnley

Lancashire

BB12 7HR

12 March 2007

Dear Children

Thank you for welcoming me in such a friendly way when I visited your school. It was clear to me that you behave extremely well in school, and enjoy your time there. Your parents certainly feel that, and told me how good they think the school is. There have been some good improvements to the building recently, and I was impressed by the different outdoor activity areas for you to enjoy.

You will remember that I came to inspect how well the school helps you to grow and learn in both the personal and academic sides of your education. I feel that the staff support you well in your personal development so that you grow as confident, willing learners who know how to get on with other people and know how to enjoy life. The school's Christian message is also clear, and I was moved by your singing of 'One more step along the world I go' and 'No more wars' in assembly.

Overall, your progress in academic learning is satisfactory, and most of you reach the levels expected of you. In your lessons, some of you make good progress, especially in reading. Some of you make satisfactory progress and there have been times when some of you have made slower progress than might be expected of you. At the moment, you all seem to be trying to do your best to learn what the staff plan for you.

I have asked the staff to help all of you reach the highest level you are capable of: this will mean hard work for them and for you! I have also asked them to make sure that any improvement plans for the school show how you will benefit as learners. You can help by continuing to try your best, and to expect of yourself the highest standards in all you do.

Once again, thank you for your welcome, and I wish you well for your futures, wherever they may take you.

Yours sincerely

E Jackson

Lead Inspector