



Darwen St Peter's Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119458
Local Authority Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number 291426
Inspection dates 22–23 November 2006
Reporting inspector George Crowther

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Turncroft Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Darwen, Lancashire
Age range of pupils	4–11		BB3 2BW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01254 701299
Number on roll (school)	271	Fax number	01254 761873
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Rev Andrew Holliday
		Headteacher	Mrs Ruth Bessant
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Peter's is an average sized primary school. Its social context is similar to that of most schools, but it is declining. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Pupils' attainment when they start school is about average, but it varies from year-to-year. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about average. Almost all the pupils are from White British backgrounds. Of those from minority ethnic heritages, very few are at the early stages of learning English. Over the past few years, the stability of the school has been affected by many staff changes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Peter's effectiveness is satisfactory. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and now has a number of strengths that were not present then. The headteacher and staff have created a positive environment in which pupils enjoy their learning and want to do well. The results of the Year 6 national tests are on an upward trend. After many changes, the staff team is now more settled. These factors give the school a satisfactory capacity to take the next step in its improvement. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Children start school with average attainment. Satisfactory provision in the Foundation Stage enables them to make steady progress. By the time they join Year 1, standards are average. During Years 1 to 6, progress continues to be satisfactory. An exception was in 2006 when the Year 6 pupils did well to reach above average standards. Across the school, standards in writing are not as good as in other aspects of pupils' work. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds make similar progress, but in a few lessons more able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently.

Pupils' personal development is good. The pupils like being at school and say their teachers make lessons interesting. Most behave well, but a few boys find it difficult to do so all the time. Pupils have a strong sense of contributing to the school community and value good links with the church. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, but there are weaknesses in some lessons because tasks and methods are not always tailored well enough to pupils' needs. Occasionally, pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not make as much progress as they could because the adults who work with them are not sufficiently aware of their current needs. The curriculum is satisfactory. It is well planned, with a particular strength in the wide range of extra activities that enliven learning. Good levels of care support pupils' understanding of how to keep safe and be healthy.

The headteacher is a determined leader who has guided the school well through turbulent times over the past few years. There is a great desire to do the best for the pupils, and initiatives to support their personal development have been implemented successfully. As yet, however, the focus on raising achievement is not sharp enough. The school is not making best use of the information it has about pupils' progress to pinpoint and tackle potential underachievement. The school's evaluation of its own work has weaknesses. It is too positive because it focuses on improvements in the school's provision and not the impact these are having on pupils' achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing throughout the school.
- Increase the proportion of lessons in which the quality of teaching is good or better so that all pupils make the progress of which they are capable.
- Ensure that staff who work with pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully aware of their current needs.

- Choose areas for development that are sharply focused on improving aspects of pupils' achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and not as good as the school's evaluation. Since the last inspection, a rising trend in the Year 6 test results shows that there have been improvements in teaching and learning. Pupils are doing better, but still not as well as they could.

When pupils start school, attainment is about average. They make satisfactory progress and usually reach broadly average standards by Year 6. Children make satisfactory progress in the Reception classes and, by the time they join Year 1, standards are about average. Progress from Year 1 to Year 6 is satisfactory. The Year 2 and Year 6 national test results have been broadly average for the past few years, as are current standards. The exception was in 2006 when the Year 6 pupils did well to reach above average standards. This was a more able group that made particularly good progress in Year 6. Across the school, standards in writing are not as good as in other aspects of pupils' work. This is because writing activities are not always challenging enough, and teachers are not making clear to pupils what they need to do to improve. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make steady progress in most lessons, because they receive sensitive support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development has improved since the last inspection because the school now has many more ways of encouraging positive attitudes. The pupils enjoy school. One pupil commented, 'I like lessons because they're fun and we do lots of creative things.' Pupils generally behave well, but there are a few boys whose erratic behaviour can hold back their learning. Relationships are positive. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Pupils have a thorough understanding of their own well-being. They know how to make healthy choices in the food they eat and the exercise they take. They feel safe in school because, if they have a concern, they know the adults will help them. They have a strong sense of being part of the community. They say staff respond to the school council's views; for example, in improving the range of activities at playtime. Older pupils have special responsibilities, such as acting as play leaders for the younger ones.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, and good in some classes. It is not as strong as the school's evaluation. Lessons usually have a good variety of tasks to capture the pupils' interest. Good relationships help teachers to organise and manage lessons effectively. The good teaching has a pace and urgency that encourages pupils to make rapid progress. Where there are weaknesses, whole-class sessions last too long, the pupils begin to lose interest, and the more able, in particular, are not challenged sufficiently. In some lessons, the tasks pupils are given to work on independently lack challenge for them. Occasionally, too much time is taken ensuring that all the pupils are concentrating on the task in hand.

The school has extensive systems for checking on pupils' progress. There are examples of this information being used well to support pupils at risk of underachieving. In lessons, however, the information is not always used effectively to ensure that work is best matched to pupils' needs. Setting targets for the next steps in learning, and involving pupils in assessing their own work and progress are developing well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory, but not as strong as the school's evaluation. It is well planned to cover all subjects of the National Curriculum. Planning for the mixed age classes is successful in checking that pupils do not repeat or miss topics. Children's learning in the Foundation Stage is supported effectively by many opportunities for stimulating play, both inside and outside. Literacy and numeracy skills are developed well in other subjects, but a lack of resources in classrooms reduces opportunities for extending information and communication technology skills. Pupils appreciate the opportunities for discussion in their weekly personal development lessons. They act on the advice given and this leads to a harmonious and friendly community. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of visits, visitors and clubs. During the inspection, a self-defence instructor worked with every class guiding them on keeping safe. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory. Pupils with a statement of special educational need do well because of very effective support from teaching assistants. Other pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not always do as well as they could because staff do not make enough use of pupils' individual education plans to guide their teaching or to check on progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Levels of care are very good. Pupils receive individual support in a range of circumstances because staff know them very well and the school has good systems to provide extra care, when needed. For example, a teaching assistant provided very good

support for two pupils at the early stages of learning English. The Pink Slip system ensures effective monitoring and tracking of pastoral issues. The learning mentor provides sensitive support for vulnerable pupils. Pupils feel safe in school. Worry Boxes in classrooms provide reassurance for pupils who have personal problems or who may need confidential support. All staff are trained in child protection. All statutory requirements regarding safeguarding children are in place. Risk assessments are robust, even to the extent of staff training in manual lifting techniques. Governors monitor the site at regular intervals for health and safety hazards. Academic support and guidance are satisfactory. Pupils have targets to guide their learning, but some teachers make better use of them than others.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory and not as strong as the school's evaluation. The headteacher is a good leader who has the support of everyone in the school community. During a period of many changes, she has been successful in improving pupils' behaviour and personal development and establishing a positive environment for learning. Closer attention is now being focused on raising pupils' achievement.

Self-evaluation has weaknesses because too much weight has been given to improvements since the last inspection, which have been good, and too little to their impact on pupils' achievement, which is still satisfactory. This has led the school to judge some satisfactory aspects of its work as good. Nevertheless, improved monitoring is helping the school to gain a better picture of areas that require attention. As yet, this information is not reflected fully in the school's improvement plan. In practice, however, subject leaders are putting in place some effective actions that are starting to raise standards.

The views of parents, pupils and other members of the school community are sought and acted upon. The school is successful in ensuring that all pupils are fully involved in learning and school life, whatever their background, ability or particular needs. Governors are supportive of the school and its values. They take a keen interest in many aspects of school, but they do not have a sharp enough focus on whether pupils are doing as well as they should.

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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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
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	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	3

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	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?	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?	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

Darwen St Peter's Church of England Primary School

Turncroft Road

Darwen

Lancashire

BB3 2BW

29 November 2006

Dear Children

Thank you for making us feel so welcome, and for being helpful, when we visited your school to find out how well you are doing. There are lots of good things about your school, but we also found some ways in which we think it could be even better. The strengths we found are:

- your school is a happy place where everyone is friendly and you all get on well together
- you enjoy the work in lessons and you try hard to do your best
- we saw some good teaching, which helped you to learn quickly
- many of you have special jobs, which help you to feel part of the community
- the older children do a good job acting as play leaders for the younger ones
- there are lots of interesting things to do in lessons
- you enjoy the activities outside lessons, particularly the visits and clubs
- most of you are well behaved and polite to visitors
- you like the way the staff take great care to make sure you are safe and happy.

We would like you to work with your teachers to improve the way you learn.

- The standard of your writing has improved but it could be even better. We have asked your teachers to give you challenging activities that help you to improve your writing. You must try hard to make your writing better.
- Occasionally in lessons, your teachers do not choose the best activities to help you learn as quickly as you can. We've asked them to make sure the work helps you to improve. You must try hard and work as quickly as you can.
- Some of you find learning difficult and you get special support. We've asked your teachers to make sure you do the best activities in lessons to help you improve.
- Your teachers try new ways of helping you to learn quickly. We have asked them to check that these work really well for you and, if they don't, to try some other ways to help you be successful.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school.

Yours sincerely

George Crowther Jennie Platt Joe Clark

Lead Inspector Team Inspector Team Inspector