



Altham St James' Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119577
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 291468
Inspection dates 1–2 March 2007
Reporting inspector Kathleen McArthur

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Burnley Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Altham Village, Accrington
Age range of pupils	4–11		Lancashire, BB5 5UH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01282 772174
Number on roll (school)	58	Fax number	01282 772174
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Jill Jones
		Headteacher	Mr Peter Williams
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This very small school has strong links with the Church and the local community. There are two classes in the school; one for Reception, Year1 and 2, and another for Years 3 to 6. All pupils are of White British origin. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is very low. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Children's attainment is typical for their age when they start school. An inspection of the school's religious character was conducted at the same time as this inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that gives good value for money. The inspection confirmed the school's accurate evaluation of how effective it is. Good leadership by the headteacher, good teaching and levels of care for pupils' welfare and guidance ensure that they achieve well. Pupils reach above average standards and become mature and caring individuals. Parents hold the school in very high regard. They particularly appreciate the very strong Christian ethos and believe the school instils good moral values and social skills. One typical comment was, 'The close family atmosphere helps all children achieve their potential and builds a good sense of self-esteem'.

Pupils' personal development is good. They really enjoy school and everything it offers so they strive hard and achieve well. They feel safe and know they can seek help from any adult working in the school. Pupils are proud of the code of conduct that they helped draw up. Consequently, they behave well and show high levels of respect towards adults and for each other. They willingly undertake responsibilities and are sensible monitors and school councillors. Fundraising and participation in local events help pupils become aware of issues that affect the wider community. Good academic, personal and social skills prepare them well for their future economic well-being. Attendance is satisfactory.

Quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Children make satisfactory progress overall and reach the learning goals expected for their age, but progress is a little uneven across the six areas of learning, being slower in language and writing skills. Progress speeds up as pupils move through the school. In 2006, all pupils reached the national levels at the end of Key Stage 1, but fewer have attained higher levels, particularly in writing. Progress in English, mathematics and science accelerates again in Key Stage 2. Standards were above average in the 2006 national tests, and three quarters of the year group attained the higher level in science.

Teaching and learning are good. Pupils say teachers make work fun, so pupils work hard and achieve well. Good assessment and tracking systems provide clear information of pupils' progress, which is used to plan work that meets the needs of most pupils very effectively. All staff know the pupils and their families well, and parents are pleased with the high quality of care shown towards their children. The curriculum is good and a varied range of visits, visitors and clubs enrich learning.

The headteacher successfully provides good leadership while carrying out a heavy teaching load. His dedication and vision for school improvement have the full support of the committed staff team, parents and governors. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection and good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure children in the Foundation Stage make consistently good progress across all areas of learning.
- Increase the challenge for pupils in Key Stage 1 so more reach higher levels in writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Pupils make good progress through the school so by the time they leave, standards are above average. This is a result of good teaching and careful tracking of progress to target support where most needed.

Children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress overall, and the great majority reach the goals for their age in all six areas of learning. However, when they start school, attainment in language is lower than in other areas of learning and writing skills develop more slowly. They make good progress in knowledge and understanding of the world and physical and creative development.

Progress speeds up in Key Stage 1. All pupils reached the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics in 2006, and this has been the case in all recent years. However, only a few reached the higher levels, particularly in writing, reflecting their lower starting point in this area.

Progress accelerates in Key Stage 2. Pupils have met or exceeded their targets in recent years. In 2006, pupils exceeded challenging targets for English and science, and met the targets for mathematics. Achievement is very good in science, and three quarters of the pupils attained the higher Level 5 in 2006. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities progress well in relation to their capabilities because they are supported well by skilled staff.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and good relationships are strong features of the school. Good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures that pupils mature into polite, friendly individuals who really enjoy school, are keen to work and relish new experiences. Pupils become increasingly responsible, and the older ones are always careful to help younger ones. They feel the mixed-age classes benefit them socially and academically and happily work and play together with respect and consideration for others. They think the rules are fair and behaviour is usually good. The school's commitment to ensuring pupils know how to be healthy is demonstrated in the work to gain Healthy Schools' accreditation. Pupils feel safe in school and report that bullying is not a problem. School councillors seek ideas for improvements; for example, they recently raised funds to buy equipment for use during wet playtimes. Pupils participate in local and parish activities such as the community carol service. Good literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills prepare them well for their future economic well-being. Attendance is satisfactory. The school does all it can to encourage regular attendance but a few families persist in taking holidays during term time

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall. Typically, lessons are well-planned and cater for different learning styles; for example, some pupils are visual learners while others are listeners. Brisk pace motivates pupils, develops their thinking skills and holds their attention so they progress well. Teachers use assessment information effectively to target and support individual needs, particularly in the small 'focus groups'. Most activities are well-matched to pupils of different abilities and ages. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities participate fully in all lessons because staff provide consistently good support for their learning. Occasionally, all pupils are given the same work, which can be too hard for some and too easy for others and this hinders progress. Younger, more able pupils are not always challenged enough and consequently they do not always reach the higher levels, particularly in writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, provides a balanced range of activities, effectively adapted to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Good provision for literacy, numeracy and information technology (ICT) supports pupils in all subjects. Pupils are taught by several different teachers and benefit from their specialist subject expertise; for example in physical education, art and design and ICT. Consequently they reach good standards in these subjects. The good programme of personal and social education results in mature, responsible pupils who make informed choices, considerate of their own and others' feelings and emotions. Foundation Stage children learn through practical activities and have some opportunities to learn outside, but do not have their own, separate outdoor learning area. The annual residential experience for older pupils, outings and visitors enrich the curriculum successfully. Parents say the school offers a good variety of activities outside lessons, and pupils are eager to attend sports and music clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares for all pupils well so they flourish in the safe, secure atmosphere and become happy, confident learners and community members. Procedures to safeguard pupils meet current government requirements. The school has good links with parents and utilises all available pupil support agencies. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive individual support, which ensures that they progress well alongside their peers. Good induction and transition arrangements ensure that children start school happily and move on to the next stage of their education with confidence. Effective tracking systems give a very clear picture of how well pupils are progressing and where additional help is needed; for example, in 'focus groups'. Analysis of

assessment information shows that not enough younger, more able pupils reach the higher levels in writing. Actions to boost their writing skills are in place but have yet to become really effective. The progress of Foundation Stage children is tracked thoroughly, and there are signs that targeted support is beginning to help them progress more rapidly.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's vision and commitment, fully supported by staff, governors and parents has driven school improvement to raise standards and ensure that pupils learn and grow in a happy Christian ethos. He successfully combines an almost full-time teaching role with the main leadership roles, including monitoring of teaching and learning and setting challenging targets. Staff participate in decision-making, development planning and school evaluation.

Governance is satisfactory; training and experience are increasing governors' ability to challenge and question the work of the school, while providing valuable support. The school successfully ensures that all pupils are included in all activities. Good links with local schools extend learning opportunities well, for example in ICT, science and cultural activities. Careful financial management has provided improvements to the building and grounds, considerably enhancing the environment for teaching and learning.

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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	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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	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.

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	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

Altham St James' Church of England Primary School

Burnley Road

Altham Village

Accrington

Lancashire

BB5 5UH

4 March 2007

Dear Children

It was good to meet you all when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed my visit because everyone was very friendly and polite and I could see that you are all very proud of your school. Thank you for making me so welcome and telling me all about your school.

I thought you would like to know what I found.

You go to a good school and are well cared for so you become mature and sensible members of the community. I was very impressed by your good behaviour and by the way you look after each other so well. Your parents told me they are very happy with your school.

You have good teachers who work hard to make sure your work is interesting. You told me they make your work fun. I know that you try hard because you reach good standards.

Your headteacher is a good leader. He has a very busy job and teaches all of you, and I know you enjoy his lessons. He works very hard with the staff and the governors, finding ways to make your school even better.

You can help your school by working as hard as you can all the time. The teachers are going to make sure children in the Foundation Stage progress more quickly. Teachers are also going to help the infants improve their writing.

I know you enjoy school and I hope you will all do really well in the future!

Best wishes to you all,

Yours sincerely

Mrs Kathleen McArthur

(Lead inspector)