



Newton Bluecoat Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119805
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 291547
Inspection dates 12–13 October 2006
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		Newton-with-Scales, Preston
Age range of pupils	3–11		Lancashire, PR4 3RT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01772 684415
Number on roll (school)	247	Fax number	01772 671763
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Father Giles Allen
		Headteacher	Mr James Bird
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is of average size and its pupils are almost exclusively White British, with small numbers of African, Asian, pupils of mixed heritage and pupils from other white backgrounds. No pupil is at an early stage of learning English. The large majority of pupils are from fairly affluent homes, and the proportion taking free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. There is a small number of pupils in public care. Children's attainment at entry is broadly above average, although it varies from year to year. The school has had a prolonged period of staff disruption, now settled.

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 is improving well, confirming the school's own view in its accurate self-evaluation. Prolonged staffing disruption, exacerbated by major building work, had a significant adverse effect on pupils' learning after the last inspection. The appointment by governors of an experienced and skilled headteacher and a very effective deputy headteacher in 2004 has led to rapid improvements in staffing stability and pupils' progress. Parents wholeheartedly support the changes, one saying that, 'Progress has been tremendous during the last year.' Pupils feel that they are listened to and made fully aware of how to stay healthy, be safe and improve their work. Improvements still required from the last inspection in 2002 have been tackled with renewed vigour, particularly in the key areas of staff morale, decision-making processes and the involvement of governors. These are all now good, leading to strong progress in the school's recent development and good capacity to improve further.

By 2005, Year 6 standards had fallen from significantly above average levels to just above average levels, representing inadequate achievement for a number of pupils, especially in English. The results in 2006 for Year 6 have risen strongly. Over half the pupils gained the higher than expected Level 5 in English and science, with just under half gaining the higher level in mathematics. The current Year 6 are maintaining their good progress from last year. The levels pupils achieve by Year 6, allied to the high quality of their personal development, equips them very well for their future lives. In the Nursery and Reception classes, children's attainment is above expected levels in all areas of learning except physical development. Progress varies from good in the Nursery to satisfactory in Reception. The accommodation for the Reception and Nursery class does not support the shared curriculum effectively, and the provision for outdoor learning is inadequate. There are active plans to deal with this. By the end of Year 2, standards have been maintained in reading, writing and mathematics at significantly above average levels for the last five years, although they have fallen slightly in mathematics. This represents good progress overall from entering Year 1.

Teaching and learning are good overall, with some outstanding features in Years 3 to 6. This is helping pupils to make up any lost ground rapidly. There are times, however, when the teaching does not challenge specific groups of pupils effectively enough, especially high attainers. Pupils' personal development is outstanding, and their well-being is promoted very well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also outstanding, and pupils make a good contribution to their own and wider society. The staff's care for the pupils is excellent, and their guidance and support for them are good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide work for all groups of pupils that challenges them to improve from their current level so that they all achieve to their capabilities.
- Improve the indoor accommodation and the outdoor learning area to enable Nursery and Reception children to learn more effectively.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. After a period of significant staff turbulence that slowed their progress, pupils now make good progress overall. Vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress across the school because they receive good, focused support. Pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as their peers.

Progress is good in the Nursery and satisfactory in Reception, but it is good in personal and social development. By the end of Reception, children reach above expected levels in most areas of learning except in physical development where they reach expected levels. By the end of Year 2, standards have been maintained at significantly above average levels, although results in mathematics have fallen. This represents good progress in Years 1 and 2, particularly in reading and writing.

Standards have generally been significantly above average by the end of Year 6. However, in 2005 they fell to broadly average levels. Unusually, boys achieved higher results than girls because a small group of girls did not make expected progress. Over three years, achievement has fallen by the end of Year 6 compared to the achievement of pupils in similar circumstances, and fell into the lowest 10% in 2005. This falling trend in achievement follows considerable disruption to pupils' learning over some years, due in part to an unusually high succession of temporary teachers, especially for the 2005 Year 6 and current Year 3. Staffing in the school is now settled, and current progress is back to good levels. Results in national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2006 match the school's usual high levels, providing good evidence that the decline in standards has been halted. This view is supported from the evidence of the school's own test and assessment data for the current Year 3 to 6 pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

This aspect of the school's work is outstanding, a maintained strength since the last inspection. The pupils feel safe at school and have a very good understanding of healthy living, especially through their participation in games and sport. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. Parents work closely with the school and their shared faith gives pupils a set of values for living that all aspire to, and that many achieve. For example, an excellent assembly for Years 3 to 6 pupils was both spiritually uplifting and instructive in helping them understand the full meaning of the Lord's Prayer. The older pupils in particular make a good contribution to the school community because the school gives pupils very good opportunities to take responsibility. This is extended through the many charitable donations made, including to a school in Romania. There are real strengths in pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Because the pupils do not learn enough about the diverse nature of British society, their cultural development is good rather than excellent. Pupils say that their lessons are fun, and that they greatly enjoy the wide range of clubs and activities the school provides. This is clear from their good attendance.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good, and sometimes outstanding in Years 3 to 6. The staff relate to the pupils really well so that they are happy to concentrate and get on with their tasks. For example, in a Year 3 art lesson there was a buzz of excited pleasure as pupils constructed finely observed collages depicting sliced fruits. The teaching of English and mathematics is good, and pupils know what they need to do to improve. Teachers constantly assess how well pupils have made progress, and plan well for their next steps. Marking is often thorough and purposeful. The support staff make a good and sometimes excellent contribution to pupils' learning, such as in leading Year 2 art and design, or in working with pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. In some lessons, there is insufficient challenge for the different groups of pupils, especially those who are potentially high attainers. Staff development has been arranged to improve this aspect of teachers' planning. However, in the best lessons, all groups had interesting and well-pitched work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum that is very well-enriched, and that the pupils enjoy. Older pupils feel that they have exciting learning opportunities through clubs and residential visits. The core subjects of English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) are covered effectively, and some staff have begun to link learning between subjects well, such as in English and history. Good improvements have been made in art and design, design and technology, history and geography since the last inspection. Provision for physical education is a strength, particularly in sports and games. This contributes well to the school's emphasis on developing healthy lifestyles. There is very good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, often led well by support staff. In the Foundation Stage, all aspects of the curriculum are covered, but the development of a shared approach between Nursery and Reception is restricted by the accommodation. Outdoor learning is also limited because the area is so small, particularly for Reception children. There are active plans to improve this provision.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This aspect is good overall: care arrangements are excellent. All required safeguarding and safety requirements are firmly in place. Pupils say that they feel well-cared for and protected. Care and support for vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities are strengths. There are good systems to ensure that pupils are guided in both their personal and academic achievement. Teachers increasingly involve the pupils in setting and working towards personal learning targets, reinforced

by a well-received reward system. However, pupils' involvement in self-assessment is not yet fully in place across the school, and the identification and provision for able, gifted and talented pupils are at an early stage of development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The drive provided by the senior leadership team has invigorated the rest of the staff. For example, a staff team has recently planned an exciting 'Health Week' with great enthusiasm and teamwork. Governors are much more involved than at the last inspection, and feel that they have made good appointments recently. They are right, and governance has improved from being unsatisfactory at the last inspection to being good now. The headteacher and deputy headteacher, with the full support of all the staff, have reversed the fall in standards while maintaining the high quality of pupils' personal development. They have also ensured that parents continue to be fully involved in their children's school life. Good partnerships have also been established with a number of other local schools and colleges. The staff have recently tackled required improvements from the last inspection very effectively. Some of the developments the staff wish to implement are at an early stage, such as changes to the Foundation Stage accommodation and outdoor provision. However, staff morale is high, and the atmosphere in the school is one of enjoyable purpose. As one parent said, 'You get the whole package at Bluecoat.'

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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?	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	2
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	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	1
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

Newton Bluecoat Church of England Primary School

School Lane

Newton-with-Scales

Preston

Lancashire

PR4 3RT

16 October 2006

Dear Children

You will remember that Mr Byrne and I visited your school a few weeks ago to see how you were getting on. We both want to thank you for being so helpful to us, and for making us feel so welcome.

We think, as you and your parents do, that yours is a good school. This also matches what Mr Bird and your governors said. The teachers make sure that you learn well and make good progress. You help by behaving very well and trying hard with your work. You also understand how to stay safe and be healthy because the school puts a strong focus on these issues, particularly through sport. We feel that you get on well together, and are always prepared to help others, such as those children that you support in the school in Romania. Your teachers are good at spotting who needs extra help, and the support staff are good at providing that help. We think that they look after you very well, and try to involve you as much as they can in knowing what you should learn. We would like to have been there for Health Week. It looked really exciting in the teachers' plans.

In deciding how it might improve, we have asked the school to focus on two areas. The first is to improve the Nursery and Reception classes so that children can learn better together, and to provide a bigger and better equipped outdoor area for them. You may know that the school already has plans for this. We would also like the teachers to help all of you, whatever your needs or starting points, to make the best progress you can. You can help by continuing to try your best in all you do in school. We don't think, though, that you should start knocking walls down in the Foundation Stage, or laying tarmac outside. You can leave that to the builders!

With best wishes for your futures, wherever they may take you.

Eric Jackson (Lead Inspector); Dave Byrne (Team Inspector)