



St Silas CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 132045
Local Authority Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number 293926
Inspection dates 1–2 March 2007
Reporting inspector Carole Cressey

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Clematis Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Blackburn, Lancashire
Age range of pupils	4–11		BB2 6JP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01254 698447
Number on roll (school)	378	Fax number	01254 694809
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Malcolm Munroe
		Headteacher	Mrs Hillary Healey
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4–11	1–2 March 2007	293926

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large urban school. Most pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds mainly from Asian heritage families. The majority are from Pakistani families with a few from Indian and Bengali homes. An increasing number come from other European and African groups. A small number are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is above average, as is the percentage with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The attainment of children when they start school is well below average and the majority have English as an additional language. At present, there are thirteen languages spoken in the Reception class. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had been in post a term and a half.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Silas is a satisfactory and improving school. The school has a very accurate insight into its strengths and weaknesses and believes itself to be satisfactory. The inspection agrees but also judges that there are some good things happening here.

Children enter Reception with attainment that is well below what is expected for their ages; throughout the school their achievement is broadly satisfactory and pupils leave Year 6 with academic standards overall, which have usually been below average and sometimes well below. Girls consistently out-perform boys and boys of Pakistani heritage have not achieved as well as they could, particularly in writing. However, this picture is changing fast. The new headteacher is strongly improving the school's learning ethos. This is helping to accelerate pupils' learning and achievement and raise their attainment. The headteacher has already gained the confidence of parents, governors and staff so that everyone shares her high aspirations for the pupils' success.

Throughout the school, including the Foundation Stage, teaching, curriculum and care are satisfactory and improving. The school nurtures those pupils with complex disabilities and difficulties well and as a result they make good progress towards their targets. The school has developed some very innovative approaches as part of this drive for improvement. Early indicators show these initiatives, being trialled in mathematics, are making learning more purposeful and challenging. Here, marking and assessments are becoming increasingly rigorous, identifying precisely what pupils need to do to improve. Teachers are beginning to track pupils' progress regularly to identify whether they are on target to reach the challenging levels expected of them. Teaching is less strong in English. Tasks are not always sufficiently challenging and assessments and marking are inconsistent and underdeveloped, resulting in pupils not achieving as well as they could. The headteacher has begun to redeploy bilingual and dedicated support staff to help those pupils learning English more effectively.

The vast majority of pupils' good attitudes and behaviour make an important contribution to their enjoyment of school. Pupils have a good understanding of how they can stay healthy, keep themselves and others safe and become responsible, confident and mature young citizens. Pupils' satisfactory achievement in basic literacy and numeracy means that they are satisfactorily prepared for life beyond the school. Attendance is below the national average, mainly because of extended holidays taken during term time.

The school works successfully with a variety of organisations, including local schools, to improve its provision. It has made satisfactory improvements since the last inspection and has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in English (especially writing), mathematics and science.
- Improve teaching so all lessons challenge and interest learners and motivate them to do their best.

- Use assessment systems more effectively to ensure that pupils do not underachieve, especially boys from Pakistani heritage groups.
- Work with parents and the community to improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are below average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory, but improving. Changes to the curriculum and higher expectations of pupils' capability are beginning to accelerate learning. Targets are becoming increasingly challenging so that pupils are making better progress and as a result standards are rising.

Children in Reception make satisfactory progress towards the national learning goals from well below average levels at entry. By the time they move into Year 1, the number of pupils who attain expected levels is still much lower than is the case nationally. This is especially true in English language skills. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 and standards have been significantly below average for a number of years. In Key Stage 2, standards in national tests have often been well below average but pupils made satisfactory progress from the levels reached in Year 2. In the 2006 tests, standards were broadly average for mathematics and science and the school did well to achieve its targets but results in English were very low and targets were not met. This was because pupils did not achieve well enough in writing. Boys of Pakistani heritage did particularly poorly. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive good support and make good progress towards their targets. The reorganised support for pupils learning English as an additional language is beginning to improve their progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In keeping with the religious background of the school, pupils are particularly welcoming and always happy to help each other and to take responsibility. Behaviour in lessons is good. Pupils are becoming more and more eager to learn and are rising to the higher expectations their teachers have of them. This is particularly apparent in mathematics where they relish the many challenges their teachers are providing for them. Pupils have a good understanding of the different faiths and traditions of their school community and of Europe and the wider world. Pupils are particularly proud that through the school council they can make their school a happier and safer place to be; for example, by being involved in deciding what the school rules should be. Pupils know how to keep fit and understand why it is sensible to eat healthily. Attendance is below average but is improving slowly because the school works hard with parents to promote better attendance.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving. The teaching of mathematics is particularly good. In all lessons, including in Reception, pupils are managed well and relationships are warm and encouraging. Pupils respond well to their teachers' positive reminders of how to develop good attitudes to learning. An increasing feature of lessons is the opportunity to explore ideas and check out answers with their 'talking partners'. This is particularly helpful in developing speaking and listening skills for pupils where English is not the home language. However, teachers occasionally miss opportunities to extend pupils' thinking through more challenging questions and tasks. An imaginative and challenging mathematics scheme is having a very positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning in this subject. Teachers plan and assess work exceptionally well to continually challenge pupils to work to their capacity. Teachers, pupils and parents have all been caught up in the excitement of seeing how quickly pupils can move on to the next level. Boys are now keen to do well, enjoying the friendly competition and rigour in their mathematics lessons. In other subjects, there are instances where marking is used effectively to help pupils improve, but this is not consistent and there are missed opportunities to extend learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall, with some good aspects. It is well enriched by involvement in themes, such as 'World Book Day' and by a good range of visits and visitors. This is further enhanced by extra-curricular activities including sport, Spanish, music and by 'Golden Time', which provides wider opportunities for enrichment and enjoyment. The school is in the process of changing its planning in order to focus more closely on the specific language and cultural needs of the school community. There is a clear emphasis on literacy and numeracy, particularly on speaking and listening. The planning of mathematics is now engaging pupils and is especially effective in motivating boys. The school knows that similar strategies are needed in all subjects to enable all pupils, including higher attainers and boys, to achieve higher standards. Strategies for developing personal and social and health education are good and this leads to a good understanding of how to maintain healthy life styles. Work for those pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is effectively planned to meet individual needs and ensure equal opportunities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Required child protection, safeguarding and risk assessment procedures are in place. This is a caring school where all pupils are well-known to staff and are highly valued so that they develop high

self-esteem. This helps to develop pupils' confidence and positive attitudes to work. The redeployment of staff time to support bilingual pupils and those at an early stage of learning English is helping here. The school is extending its links with parents and they appreciate the care provided by the school. The school provides sensitive and additional support for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities so that they make good progress and enjoy an additional range of enrichment experiences. The school's systems for tracking pupil attainment are not yet rigorous enough to ensure that they make the progress they are capable of to achieve their full potential.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher is an inspiring leader. She has quickly and accurately assessed what needs to be done to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can. Her quiet, calm authority and excellent building of relationships are helping teachers and support staff to develop their own skills and to grow in confidence. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving, especially in mathematics, and pupils' progress is beginning to accelerate. Leaders at all levels have taken on more responsibility in identifying how best to improve provision. They have identified that some groups of pupils are not sufficiently challenged and have prioritised exceptionally well those aspects that will make the most significant impact on improving their learning. New rigorous assessment systems and a lively and imaginative mathematics scheme are already having a positive impact and standards are rising. Governance is satisfactory, and governors are very supportive of the school and its community. The leadership team manage resources very well and make good attempts to minimise the very obvious inadequacies of the school building. Pupils' opportunities for more exciting practical learning are limited due to the cramped indoor space. The school works very well with parents and sees them as equal partners in their children's education. The parents' confidence in the leadership and management of the school is very well placed.

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?	3
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?	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	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	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	2
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

St Silas CofE Primary School

Clematis Street

Blackburn

Lancashire

BB2 6JP

5 March 2007

Dear Pupils

Thank you so much for being so friendly and helpful when we visited your school a short time ago. We enjoyed talking with you and your teachers.

We were particularly pleased to see how much you enjoy school, especially mathematics lessons. You obviously like the hard work you have to do to 'climb those mountains'. We think that you could work just as hard in all of your lessons especially English, so we have asked your teachers to give you work that challenges you as it does in mathematics. We think the boys particularly could do better.

When we looked at your work, we thought you needed more help in knowing how well you are doing in your work and what you need to do to improve.

Your behaviour in lessons and around school was very good, so well done. You seemed particularly proud that through the school council you can make your school a happier and safer place to be. What a good idea to help the teachers make the school rules! Good luck with selling fruit drinks at playtime; we do hope you make lots of money to buy more playground equipment.

You seem to know the importance of eating sensible food and taking lots of exercise. Do keep that up because it is so important to stay healthy and happy.

We think that if you all work that bit harder and make sure you come to school every single day you could learn a lot and get good results in your tests and help to make your school a really good one. So good luck!

We do hope you continue to enjoy school as much as you do now and that it will help you to become happy and successful adults.

Yours sincerely

Carole Cressey

Kathryn Dodd

David Earley

Additional Inspectors