

St Paul's CofE Primary School, Astley Bridge

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105206
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	308796
Inspection dates	8–9 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Stephen Wall

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andy Lindop
Headteacher	Mr R Dean
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2003
School address	Newnham Street Astley Bridge Bolton Lancashire BL1 8QA
Telephone number	01204 333741
Fax number	01204 333742

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average size primary school is situated in an urban area of quite challenging social and economic circumstances. Roughly half of the pupils are of minority ethnic heritage. Most of these do not speak English as their mother tongue. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities including those with statements of special educational need is below average. The school holds the Healthy Schools Award, Dyslexia Friendly Award, Inclusion Kitemark and the ICT Mark for information and communications technology (ICT). Following the full-time secondment of the headteacher to work with the local authority during the present school year, an acting headteacher and deputy headteacher have been in post since September 2007. Both were appointed internally.

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 with an outstanding Foundation Stage. Its outstanding curriculum makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being which are also outstanding. The pupils are rightly very proud of their school and parents value highly the quality of education it provides. 'My children have come on in leaps and bounds at St Paul's. They love going to school and I am very pleased with how the school is helping them to grow and develop,' was a typical parent view. The acting headteacher, ably supported by the acting deputy headteacher, has quickly settled in to his new role and is providing effective leadership and management to build on and develop the strengths of the school. The school gives good value for money.

The immediate impression on entering the school is how happy everyone is. Respectful relationships, underpinned by strong Christian values, are the cornerstones of the school's work. Adults act as excellent role models for the pupils. They treat them with genuine warmth and respect. This is a school in which every child really matters. As a result, pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Relationships throughout the school are exceptionally strong. Pupils from different racial and religious backgrounds interact without any barriers. As one pupil put it, 'It's not the colour of your skin or your religion that matters here; it's what kind of person you are!' As a result, it is a real pleasure to see how well all the pupils play and work together harmoniously. Pupils' enjoyment of school can be seen in well above average attendance levels and in their very good behaviour. They are eager to take on positions of responsibility by becoming prefects or playground monitors, for example. The school council does outstanding work and serves as a model for democratic participation in the running of the school. For example, school councillors are invited to participate in interviews for appointing new members of staff. By the time they leave in Year 6, pupils have developed high levels of self-esteem and positive attitudes to learning. The school is equipping them outstandingly well to take advantage of the next stages in their education.

After getting off to a flying start in Reception, all pupils make good progress in their learning and achieve well as they move up through the school because of good and purposeful teaching. The outstanding curriculum also supports their learning by providing an excellent range of enrichment activities which feed the pupils' enjoyment and inquisitiveness. From below average starting points, pupils attain average standards overall by the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. In English and science, standards are above average by the end of Year 6. In mathematics, however, standards are not yet as high as they should be because the school's procedures for using assessment data are not yet effective enough in matching work to learners' needs. While teachers mark pupils' work regularly, their comments are not consistently clear in telling pupils what they need to do to improve their work.

The acting headteacher is providing the school with a clear focus on improving standards and achievement even further. He is inspiring strong teamwork by delegating increasing amounts of responsibility across the school. For example, new procedures for making the use of assessment more effective by involving class teachers more closely in planning their work are being introduced but it is too early yet for their impact to be seen. The well informed governing body supports the school well and is not afraid to challenge the leadership when it feels the need to do so. The school's record of good improvement since the last inspection, together with its ability to realistically appraise its current position, places it in a good position to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Reception class is led and managed outstandingly well to ensure it provides a safe and nurturing environment in which pupils can flourish. Transition arrangements are excellent. They ensure that children settle in quickly and confidently. The school involves parents closely in preparing the children for school and keeps them fully informed about progress. From starting points which are below those expected for their age, children make rapid progress to attain standards which are consistently in line with or above those expected. Rapid progress is brought about by outstanding teaching and a curriculum which provides a wide range of stimulating activities. In all, the Reception class provides children with an outstanding start to their schooling.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the way assessment is used so as to match work more closely to learners' needs, especially in mathematics.
- Make the marking of pupils' work consistently helpful in showing pupils how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 because of good teaching. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are average and rising. Results in 2007 confirm this upward trend. Achievement in Years 3 to 6 continues to be good overall because of good teaching. In 2006 national tests at the end of Year 6, standards were above average in English and science but average in mathematics. Demanding targets were met in English and exceeded in science. A preliminary examination of the mathematics results in 2007 tests suggests that standards have dipped. The school's evidence suggests that this was affected by mid-year staffing disruptions and the movement out of the school and local area of a number of pupils who had been predicted to reach higher levels. Nonetheless, pupils made good progress from their starting points. Boys and girls, including those from different backgrounds make similar levels of progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the good support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They demonstrate excellent knowledge and respect for different cultures and religions. In one class, for example, a Muslim pupil answered probing questions from her classmates about the festival of Eid. Her audience sat enthralled listening to her answers. Pupils fully understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Large numbers take part in the wide range of sporting enrichment activities. They know what foods are good for them and why. 'I eat quite a lot of chicken because it's good for me. It's high in protein and low in fat,' said one older pupil. Pupils say they feel safe in school. They know what to do if they have a problem and are confident that adults will listen to them carefully and help them. 'Being here is like being in a big family,' summed up pupils' feelings for their school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have high expectations of pupils resulting in very good behaviour and eagerness to learn. Relationships are very strong. Pupils work well together and support each other. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use it well to ask questions which really make pupils think. Teachers are good at explaining exactly what it is they want pupils to achieve. Occasionally, however, teachers make the introduction to their lessons too long with the result that some pupils' concentration flags. Teachers use ICT to good effect to add variety and interest to lessons. A sense of purpose and good pace ensure that little time, if any, is not used profitably. Marking is inconsistent in telling pupils how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is broad and varied and meets pupils' needs. The creative approach the school has adopted to base work around topics makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' enjoyment and positive attitudes. Pupils are really enthusiastic about their topic afternoons. 'We get to discuss what we would like to do and how we should go about it. Our topic work makes learning fun!' There is an outstanding range of visits to places of educational interest that makes the curriculum relevant to pupils' needs and helps them to appreciate their place within the community. The outstanding programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education enables pupils to understand how to lead healthy lifestyles and avoid unnecessary risks. The curriculum makes good provision for literacy, science and ICT.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The commitment to inclusion and care is central to the school. Procedures for protecting children are in place. Attention to health and safety is meticulous. Pupils know that adults are there to listen and support them when problems arise. Parents are confident that their children are well looked after. School leaders are extremely effective in removing barriers to learning. They promote racial harmony and religious tolerance. Vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early. They are supported effectively by skilled and well-trained support staff and outside agencies. Teachers are sensitive to the needs of pupils with English as an additional language. They work effectively with bi-lingual support staff to enable these pupils to make good progress. The use of assessment and target- setting to guide and support pupils' academic development is progressing but is not yet sufficiently advanced to impact fully on pupils' achievement, especially in mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher are leading and managing the school well. Managers at all levels share a vision for the school's development in promoting high achievement. They are particularly successful in bringing about pupils' outstanding personal development

and in ensuring that all pupils have good opportunities to succeed. Subject leaders lead and manage their subjects well. They are involved well in analysing the strengths and identifying areas for development in their subjects through a good range of monitoring activities. They are becoming increasingly involved in target-setting in their subjects, but it is too early to judge the impact of this. Effective procedures for self-evaluation, including consulting parents and pupils, give leaders and managers a clear view of the strengths of the school and the areas where improvement is needed. The school improvement plan grows out of the consultation process and identifies accurately what needs to be tackled to bring about further improvement.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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?	1
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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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

You may remember that Mr Martin and me visited your school recently to check on what it is like and how well all the staff are helping you to learn. Thank you for being so polite and friendly. We really enjoyed talking to you and listening to what you had to say about your school and how much you enjoy it. You will be pleased to know that we think you go to a good school which has some really outstanding features.

The things that we think are really good about it are:

- the youngest children in Reception are given an excellent start to their school life
- the way in which all staff enable you to do well in your lessons
- your excellent behaviour and the way in which you all get on so well with each other
- your attitudes to lessons: you really enjoy them and work hard
- the way in which all the people in school care for you and help you in all you do
- how much the school offers you to enable you to grow into responsible youngsters by the time you leave.

We have asked your teachers to improve two things to make the school even better. First, we want them to make sure that the work they ask you to do is not too easy or too hard, especially in mathematics. Second, we want your teachers to make sure that they tell you clearly what you need to do to make your work better in the comments they put in your books.

Thank you very much for helping us with the inspection. We hope that you will keep on enjoying school and doing well. Most of all, we hope that you will carry on helping the staff to make your school an even better place to learn!