

St Matthew's CofE Primary School, Little Lever

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105242
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	308808
Inspection dates	17–18 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Gordon Allison

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr John Wiseman
Headteacher	Mrs Georgina Ryding
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2003
School address	Norris Street Little Lever Bolton Lancashire BL3 1BQ
Telephone number	01204 333692
Fax number	01204 333693

Age group	5-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This slightly below average size school serves an area where the socio-economic circumstances are average when compared with the rest of the country. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils from ethnic groups is well below that found in most schools. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has gained the Investors in People award. A new headteacher has been appointed from September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is satisfactory school. Recent measures are beginning to halt the decline in the amount of progress that pupils make'. A major factor in this has been the dynamic and clear direction provided by the new leadership of the headteacher and the effective support from the Local Authority. Since the headteacher's appointment, close attention has been given to improving the quality of teaching and learning and to monitoring the progress that pupils make. There are now clear signs of improvement in these areas. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Pupils come to the school with skills that are normally expected of children of this age. Their performance in national tests, at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, is broadly in line with national averages. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in the tests is below average, especially by the end of Year 6. Most pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. However, the most able pupils could do better as many are not yet achieving their full potential. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress due to the effective support they receive.

Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers want to do their best for the pupils; they work hard and the pupils respond well. Relationships between them are a real strength. As a result, behaviour in lessons and around the school is invariably good. However, there is a lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils in some lessons, which prevents them reaching higher standards. The curriculum is broad and balanced. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved since the last inspection and, as a result, pupils make satisfactory progress in this subject.

The level of care, guidance and support is satisfactory overall. A particularly good feature is the support provided by all the school staff so personal development is good. There is a warm and caring atmosphere. Pupils enjoy coming to school; this is reflected in the good rates of attendance. They are given responsibility and as a result, develop self-confidence and a mature outlook. Parents comment strongly on how pleased they are with what the school does for their children. The school is an integral and important part of the community through its close links and activities with the church, the local area and with charities. However, the guidance pupils receive on how to improve their work in order to meet their targets is not provided consistently and specifically enough.

The recent change in the leadership of the school is beginning to have a good impact. There is a strong team approach with all staff and governors working together effectively to generate improved standards and achievement. The school's performance is being rigorously monitored so that appropriate priorities are clearly identified and effective measures have been put in place. The governors are very supportive and are developing a clearer understanding of their role in monitoring and challenging the school leaders. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory but with the new leadership there is good capacity for accelerated improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. On entry to Reception, most pupils have average level skills. By the end of Reception, most have reached the expected goals. This good progress

is the result of the good teaching they receive. The attractive, stimulating classroom encourages them, as does the positive way in which the staff work together. Relationships are excellent and, consequently, the children are confident and very well behaved. Activities are well planned so that the children show good learning habits and enjoy all they do. Interactive whiteboards are well used to stimulate discussion. There is a good balance between teacher directed activities and allowing pupils to choose so that interest is maintained. The outdoor curriculum is planned well to enrich children's learning, but its use is restricted in bad weather as there is no covered area.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the standards and achievement of higher attaining pupils from Years 1 to 6.
- Raise the quality of teaching to that of the best in the school.
- Ensure pupils consistently know their targets and the steps they need to take to reach them.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

From the good start in the Foundation Stage, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in the rest of the school. Standards in the national tests and assessments at the end of Years 2 and 6 have been average in recent years. In both key stages, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in these tests was below average in 2006. The results for 2007 show improved proportions of pupils attaining the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1. At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2007, there was good improvement in the numbers reaching the higher than expected Level 5 in mathematics. Due to the effective action of the new leadership team, these are signs of improving standards. However, most pupils currently in Years 1 to 6 make satisfactory progress and it is recognised that there is more to be done to raise standards further. The most able pupils, in particular, are not yet reaching their full potential. More reliable targets are being used to provide realistic, yet challenging expectations for teachers and pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They enjoy school as they are given consistent encouragement by their teachers and each individual is valued. They take a pride in their work and enjoy learning, as one put it, 'I want to do more work'. They have good opportunities to take on responsibility, for example, via the school council and as play leaders at break times. They perform these diligently and responsibly. Bullying is rare and the few incidents are dealt with effectively. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Assemblies develop pupils' spiritual awareness well. They have a good awareness of what is right and wrong and work together cooperatively in lessons, in pairs and groups. Cultural development is less strong. In particular, preparation for life in a multicultural society is not well developed. Pupils have an increasing understanding of how to keep fit and healthy. The pupils' well developed interpersonal skills and the satisfactory development of their basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage in their learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers know their pupils well and create a good learning atmosphere. Most lessons are well planned with a developing use of clear objectives that explain to pupils what they are to learn. However, these are not always used effectively to check on progress that pupils make. Explanations are usually clear so in most lessons pupils know what they are to do. The best lessons have an enthusiastic approach and a lively pace that rubs off on the pupils who then want to learn more. In these lessons, the teacher uses on-going assessment well to offer more challenge and to change the direction of the learning. However, this is not consistent throughout the school. Indeed, lessons do not always include enough challenge for higher attaining pupils. Recent improvement in the use of assessment data has enabled teachers to more accurately identify those pupils who are capable of better grades. Teachers are beginning to use these more effectively to support and demand more from these pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is successful in promoting pupils' personal development. However, the work planned to meet the needs of the more able pupils is not always challenging enough. The curriculum is well enhanced by the use of visits and visitors to school such as poets and drama groups. Residential visits are successful and enjoyed immensely by the pupils. There is a satisfactory range of sporting activities that promotes pupils' physical development and enjoyment of school. Music is strong, both in the take-up of instrumental tuition and in the concerts that pupils give. French is also a good feature being taught throughout the school. It is helped further by the good links with the local Languages College. Links between subjects have yet to be developed sufficiently so that the skills that pupils develop in literacy and numeracy for example, can be assessed and used effectively in other subjects. A good range of additional strategies is in place to support pupils who find learning more difficult and has enabled them to make good progress. Opportunities to develop enterprise skills are limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is strong and ensures that all pupils are well cared for. There are good links with outside agencies so pupils with additional learning needs are supported well. Secure procedures are in place to ensure pupils are kept safe and child protection arrangements are in place. The recently introduced assessment systems are beginning to give a clearer picture of pupils' progress. However, these are not yet used to their full potential to identify how well pupils are doing or to show them the next stages in their learning. Targets for pupils are identified but not used consistently through the school to help pupils understand what they need to learn and how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

All members of staff and the governors of the school now have a clear understanding of the challenges facing the school, due to the clear analysis of the issues and vision for the future presented by the headteacher. The local authority has also been effective in helping to identify areas of concern and in giving effective support. As a result, there is a cohesiveness of purpose to improve. Expectations of all in the school have been raised. The positive impact of these measures can be seen in the short time that the new leadership, which includes the recent appointment of the deputy headteacher as well as the headteacher, has been in place. For example, subject leaders are beginning to monitor progress in their areas and to plan strategies for improvement. The school improvement plan has learning, standards and achievement at its heart and is very much a working document to guide the future of the school. Pupils who are falling behind are now clearly identified and teachers are beginning to develop strategies to improve pupils' performance.

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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?	3
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
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	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

Inspection of St Matthews Church of England Primary School, Bolton,
BL3 1BQ

Mr Markham and I are most grateful for the kindness, cooperation and welcome we received when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you about your work; listening to what you thought of the school and seeing you work hard and enjoy your lessons. I have made a list below of the main things we found out about your school.

What we really liked about your school

- The warm and friendly atmosphere and the way the staff help you so that you feel safe and happy.
- Your politeness, how you help others and your good behaviour.
- The way you learn to play safely and know how to keep fit and healthy.
- The way you help other people through what you do for charity.
- How you take responsibility and make a good contribution to the running of the school.
- The good progress made in Reception and by those children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

There are some improvements that need to be made and these will be achieved if all the children give their full support to them. You should try your best to reach the higher standards your teachers will ask of you in Years 1 to 6. I have also asked the headteacher and the governors to make sure you have consistently good teaching throughout the school. You can help your teachers by listening carefully to what they tell you about how you can improve your work in order to reach your targets.

Good luck for the future.