

Holy Trinity VC School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119357
Local Authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	313266
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Shirley Herring

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	353
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Bent
Headteacher	Mr Mark Standen
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2005
School address	Bank Top Darwen Lancashire BB3 2RW
Telephone number	01254 702119
Fax number	01254 702815

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2008
Inspection number	313266

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

- This larger than average school serves an area of mainly rented, terraced housing in the centre of the town. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The vast majority of pupils are from a White British background with approximately ten per cent from an Indian or Pakistani heritage. A very small number of pupils are at an early stage of speaking English. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Children have attended a large variety of pre-school settings before they join Reception.

The new headteacher has been in post for less than a year. The school has links with the parish of St Peter and a small cluster of schools in an Action Learning Network.

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 a satisfactory and improving school. Leadership and management are sound. The school is emerging from a period of significant disruption in its leadership and management and parents report an improvement in staff morale. The new headteacher, supported by a restructured senior leadership team, has evaluated the work of the school accurately and the programme for the future shows a clear plan for improvement. The new systems in place are leading to some improvements in attendance, in reading and in the ethos of the school. It is too soon to judge the impact of the school's concerted efforts to improve teaching, assess and track pupils' progress and raise standards.

Personal development is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy school, and the good range of after-school activities is well attended. They have confidence in their teachers and feel safe. Pupils benefit from healthy menus and the healthy tuck shop is well supported. They make a good contribution to the school community by undertaking many duties; the peer mentors play a leading role in running the popular breakfast club. Pupils are adequately prepared for adult life by developing sound basic skills and working cooperatively. The new systems of rewards and sanctions are helping to improve behaviour but a small minority of pupils can show aggressive behaviour in the Key Stage 2 playground.

Progress is satisfactory overall but there are considerable variations across the school because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, though this is satisfactory overall. Children make good progress in the Reception Year because teaching is well matched to their needs. Progress stalls in Years 1 and 4 because teaching there does not build on pupils' previous learning. In the 2007 national tests standards were well below average at the end of Year 2 and very few pupils exceeded the expected level. Learning accelerates in Years 5 and 6 because teaching is consistently good and pupils make good progress. Pupils reach the standard expected for their age when they leave in Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because of the good level of skilled support they receive. Achievement for more able pupils is less marked because in some lessons teachers do not plan work that is sufficiently challenging. Expectations are not high enough; too often many pupils are given the same task which is not sufficiently demanding for the more able pupils.

The curriculum is satisfactory overall and the wide range of additional activities supports learning well. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. All the recommended procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place. Clear rules and an expectation that pupils take responsibility for their actions are helping to guide their behaviour. The school has good links with other professionals to provide specialist support when necessary. Systems for assessing and tracking pupils' work to help them improve are less well established. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the provision for information and communication technology (ICT). The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage (Reception Year) is good. Children enter the school with a range of skills that overall is well below what is usual for their age. Teaching is consistently good so children make good progress in Reception. Nevertheless standards are still below average as pupils start in Year 1. The curriculum is good. It is firmly based on a wide

range of well structured, practical activities that show a good understanding of how young children learn. There are good induction procedures to encourage children to settle quickly and the good emphasis on developing personal and social skills helps children learn good attitudes to school from an early age. The accommodation is spacious and bright but there is no direct access to a dedicated area to extend learning outdoors.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in Key Stage 1.
- Improve teaching in those year groups where pupils do not make sufficient progress.
- Use the available information to plan work to meet the needs of different groups, particularly the more able.

A small proportion of the schools judged to be 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

Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress during their time in school. However, the rate of progress varies considerably across the school and is directly related to the quality of teaching. From a low starting point when they enter school children make good progress in Reception and achieve well although they do not reach the level expected for their age when they start in Year 1. Progress in Key Stage 1 is just satisfactory because teaching in Year 1 fails to build on the previous good learning. The pupils' achievement improves in Year 2. However, in the 2007 national tests in Year 2 standards were significantly below average with very few pupils achieving a higher level. The assessments for pupils currently in Year 2 indicate that the recent introduction of a new phonics programme has resulted in an improvement in reading.

Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2 due to consistently good teaching in Years 5 and 6. In the 2007 national tests for eleven year olds results in English and mathematics were broadly average and pupils achieved well. Most recent assessments show a similar picture though fewer pupils than average exceed the expected level. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those from minority heritages and those learning English as an additional language achieve well because of the good level of skilled support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Personal development and well-being are satisfactory. The expectation that pupils are responsible for their own actions is helping to improve behaviour. However, a small minority of pupils in Key Stage 2 find it difficult to sustain this and show some aggression in the playground at lunchtime.

Pupils have an awareness of a healthy lifestyle, and the healthy tuck shop is popular. Pupils learn how to stay safe and feel confident to talk to an adult should they have a problem. 'Worry boxes' provide a discreet way for pupils to voice a concern and receive support. Pupils enjoy school and the good range of extra activities is well attended. The popular breakfast club provides many pupils with a good start to the day and is helping to improve punctuality and attendance.

Pupils have accepted increasing responsibilities in school with enthusiasm. The school council represents the views of other pupils and peer mentors play a leading role in running the breakfast club. Sound basic skills and the opportunities to work as a team provide a satisfactory basis for the future.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The school is working to improve the pupils' awareness of other cultures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall though inconsistencies throughout the school lead to variations in the quality of pupils' learning. Teaching is consistently good in the Reception Year and in Years 5 and 6 and learning moves at a fast pace in these classes. Teaching is less successful in Years 1 and 4 because lessons do not build on pupils' previous learning and this is hampering their progress.

In lessons where the teacher plans effectively to match the work to pupils' differing needs and there are clear objectives for the lesson then pupils make good progress. Too often, however, lesson plans do not identify different tasks and activities for the full range of abilities in the class. A significant number may work on the same task which is not challenging enough for the more able and so they do not achieve as well as they could. The quality of marking is improving but is not consistent across the school. Teaching assistants provide skilled support for pupils with learning disabilities and/or difficulties and they achieve well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is generally broad and balanced and is making a good contribution to pupils' personal development. There has been good improvement in the provision for ICT since the last inspection and this is helping to improve standards.

A good emphasis is placed on developing basic literacy and numeracy skills though there are limited opportunities for pupils to extend their skills, for example in solving problems. A more practical approach to learning is helping pupils to make good progress in science. The school provides an exciting range of activities outside lessons and these are well attended. Pupils participate in an extensive programme of team sports and the many trophies on display provide evidence of their success. A wide range of visits and visitors enrich learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory with some good features.

Parents appreciate the support and care which the school provides. All the recommended procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place and rigorously applied. The clear class rules and the good role models provided by the peer mentors are helping to guide and improve behaviour. Academic guidance is less well established. New systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress and giving guidance to help them to improve are being developed. In some classes pupils are beginning to evaluate their own and each other's work and this is helping them to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The new headteacher is successfully building the confidence and motivation of the staff to take the school forward. Many parents commented approvingly about the positive ethos, one parent writing that the headteacher has 'lifted the staff's spirits and will make this school a worthy place to be!' Initiatives such as the breakfast club and the appointment of peer mentors are raising pupils' self esteem and attendance is improving. The school's self-evaluation is honest and accurate. Structures and systems have been introduced to remedy identified weaknesses though it is too soon to judge the impact of concerted management actions to improve the quality of teaching, to assess and track pupils' progress and to raise standards. However, recent assessments of reading indicate that the new system for teaching letters and sounds is having a positive effect. The restructured management team is providing sound support for the headteacher and is to be strengthened by the appointment of a deputy headteacher. The role of subject leaders in monitoring progress is developing.

Governance is good. The governing body has supported the school well through a period of change and continues to support the new headteacher in an informed and constructive way. The school provides sound value for money.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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	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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

19 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holy Trinity VC School, Blackburn with Darwen, BB3 2RW

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you in class and in groups. Mr. Edwards particularly enjoyed joining you for lunch at the beautifully decorated table. I hope you enjoyed the celebration parade.

Yours is a satisfactory school and we think it is improving. There are many good things about it but some things could be even better. We agree with you and your parents that the school takes good care of you. The children in the Reception classes settle quickly into school and learn well.

You play your part in school. The peer mentors do a very good job in helping to run the breakfast club and the school council makes sure that the headteacher knows what you are thinking about school. Most of you behave well, particularly in lessons. However, one or two pupils in the Key Stage 2 playground can be a little unkind and they should try to get on better with others.

You are making satisfactory progress in your work but some of you could do even better, particularly in Key Stage 1. There is always an adult to give you extra help in class when you need it but I think those of you who can work more quickly could be given more challenging work.

The staff are going to do these things to improve your learning:

- help those of you in Key Stage 1 to do better
- give more challenging work to those of you who sometimes find things easy
- make sure that you make good progress in every class.

Good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Herring

Lead inspector