

Tatham Fells Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119379
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313274
Inspection date	1 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Gordon Alston

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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	41
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Carole Butcher
Headteacher	Miss Jacqueline Van Ryssel
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2005
School address	Lowgill Lancaster Lancashire LA2 8RA
Telephone number	01524 261441
Fax number	01524 261441

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Introduction

The inspection was a reduced tariff inspection carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues in depth:

- achievement and standards
- pupils' personal development and well-being
- pupils' care, guidance and support
- the quality of leadership and management.

Evidence was gathered from visiting lessons, discussions with pupils, staff and governors, looking at pupils' work and analysing data on pupils' progress. School documents and parental questionnaires were also analysed. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a much smaller than average sized school. It serves an area with some social and economic advantage; a below average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average. Almost all of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. There is Nursery provision in the afternoons which is fully integrated into the school as part of the Foundation Stage. The school has gained Healthy School status and is involved in a number of national and local initiatives.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

'Tatham Fells is a great place to go to school,' chorused a group of pupils, reflecting the quality of this outstanding school. The determination of the inspirational headteacher is shared by all; as the headteacher says, 'Every minute counts in this school. Teachers have a passion to teach and pupils to learn'. This philosophy ensures that the school is constantly striving to improve and provide the very best for its pupils. Parental support is exceptional in raising money for school and organising community events. The following comment typifies the views expressed by many parents in their questionnaires, 'We could not ask for anything more from the school. It is one reason why my children happily jump out of bed each morning'.

The excellent ethos is evident on entry to the school; there is a buzz of excitement as all are involved in a wonderful variety of activities. Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils are kind and friendly, enjoy learning and love school. Their attendance is very good. They thrive on hard work because it is fun. Relationships between pupils are excellent and everyone has a wide circle of friends. This is an exceptionally caring school and pupils feel secure and safe. The pupils' notice board is packed with information about activities and sporting successes, and is just one example of the school's commitment to healthy lifestyles. Pupils willingly accept responsibilities and help others in school and the wider community.

The outstanding quality of teaching and learning enables all pupils to achieve exceptionally well. The very high expectations of teachers, very exciting lessons and excellent relationships mean that pupils are very eager to learn. Results of national assessments and tests at the end of Years 2 and 6 show standards are very high and have been so for a number of years. National test results for 2007 showed that every pupil left the school having reached the expected level, and most exceeded it. Even though the school was one of the highest achieving schools in the county, it is aware of the need to improve writing standards further for more able pupils. The current high standards at the end of Years 2 and 6, combined with pupils' growing maturity, prepare them exceptionally well for the future.

The school's aim for pupils to learn through enjoyment is achieved in its outstanding curriculum. This is a major factor contributing to pupils' personal development and their outstanding achievements. The curriculum is very rich and successfully designed to meet the specific needs of the pupils in the school. Learning experiences are linked to everyday life whenever possible, making work relevant and interesting. Strong links have been established between subjects and very good use is made of the outside environment. Specialist teachers for science, information and communication technology, music and French ensure every learning experience is meaningful and exciting. A wide range of clubs, links to other schools, and the numerous visitors and educational visits provide extensive opportunities to broaden pupils' horizons.

The high levels of attention staff give to pupils' overall care, health and safety contribute greatly to the excellent achievements in the school. At all times, pupils' safety is paramount and care is taken to ensure that all safeguarding procedures are in place. Academic guidance is outstanding. The school has very effective systems for tracking pupils' progress and setting targets. Underachievement is identified quickly and support is put in place very successfully. Pupils are fully involved in their own learning and older pupils respond with enthusiasm to their individual targets and to teachers' comments. This contributes greatly to their skills of self-assessment and understanding of the steps they need to take to improve.

Leadership and management are excellent. The highly committed headteacher has earned the respect of all because of her success in creating a learning environment oozing care and happiness where all can reach their potential. Her exceptional vision for the school is embraced by all staff because she empowers them and they feel valued. Governors and subject leaders have the knowledge and skills to challenge and set priorities because they meticulously evaluate and monitor what is happening in school. Consequently, improvement since the last inspection has been outstanding. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school knows its strengths. However, this school does not rest on its laurels and has many ideas to sustain its high standards and keep abreast of national changes. For example, lessons begin at 08.30 in the school's attempt to pack as much as possible into pupils' daily lives. Consequently, the school has excellent capacity to improve and gives outstanding value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage ensures that children get off to an excellent start. On entry to the Nursery, the skills of many are slightly better than those typical for children of this age, although their social skills are not quite so good. Children are well cared for and staff's expectations for their progress are high. As a result, they make outstanding progress and, by the time they complete the Foundation Stage, they are almost all reaching expected levels for their age and many beyond them. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and work is targeted to ensure that they make rapid progress, particularly in their basic skills and communication. The coordinator provides excellent leadership, and teaching from all staff in the department is outstanding. The very good balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities means that children quickly grow in confidence and interact well together. They are happy and respond very well to the range of interesting and exciting classroom activities and the opportunities for learning through play in the stimulating outdoor area. As a result, their personal and social development is very good. The good arrangements for induction into the Nursery and for transition to Year 1 contribute well to meeting the needs of learners. Parents are fulsome in their praise for the sensitive way in which their children are introduced to school and for the high quality of care they and their children receive from all the Foundation Stage staff.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the writing of more able pupils.

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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?	1
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	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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?	1
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?	1

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?	1
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

2 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Tatham Fells Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Lancashire, LA2 8RA

Many thanks for the friendly welcome you gave me when I inspected your school. I had a wonderful time and greatly appreciated the way you chatted to me. You are correct to be so proud of your school. It is outstanding! I was very impressed by how well you are doing in English, mathematics and science. You play a large part in this by your excellent behaviour, hard work and eagerness to please your teachers. I agree that your lessons are exciting and you are very fortunate to be taught by such excellent teachers. The staff take very good care of you and it is pleasing to hear that you feel safe and secure.

Your school is led exceptionally well by the headteacher and you benefit from a wonderful variety of activities. I saw how much you enjoy challenging work which encourages you to do your best. Many of you have responsibilities and do them very well. I was also very pleased to see all the clubs you have. You take regular exercise, and sport is important to you.

I expect your teachers often say, 'This is very good but you could make it even better if you...'. Well, this is what I am telling your school. To be even better, it is important that those of you who are really good at English achieve higher standards in your writing. Those of you who are good writers may have some ideas about how you could do even better.

I am sure you will all continue to enjoy your time in school. Congratulations to you all and best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Gordon Alston

Lead inspector