

Banks St Stephens' C E School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119384
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313275
Inspection date	4 October 2007
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	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Philip Green
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Kenny
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2003
School address	Greaves Hall Avenue Banks Southport Merseyside PR9 8BL
Telephone number	01704 225332
Fax number	01704 507379

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The school was visited by one inspector for one day. The overall effectiveness of the school and the following issues were investigated: academic achievement, teaching and learning, the quality of care, guidance and support, as well as leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation document, national published assessment data, the school's records and procedures, parents' questionnaires, observation of the school at work and discussions with staff and pupils. 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 slightly smaller than average primary school with links to the church and parish. The number of pupils eligible for a free school meal is below average and almost all pupils are from a White British background; a few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The headteacher has been in post for less than a term.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St. Stephen's is a good school where pupils enjoy learning, attend regularly and achieve well. The school is well respected in the area and many parents commented on the approachability of staff, the pupils' good behaviour and the extensive range of additional activities provided.

Pupils make good progress during their time in school. They enter the Reception year with a range of skills that are broadly typical for their age and reach standards that are above average by Year 6. In Key Stage 1, teachers' assessments show standards have been above average in the five years to 2006. In the national assessments in 2006, standards were in fact well above average, with a large proportion of pupils achieving above the level expected for their age. Early indications are that the pupils' maintained this good progress in 2007.

The school's data and an examination of pupils' work for the past year show the good standards in Year 2 are not sustained or built on enough in Years 3 and 4, although progress is satisfactory. This has been due in part to disruptions in staffing and less clarity of focus in some teaching. With more stability in staffing, evidence from pupils' books shows a relative improvement in the first month of this new school year. Progress accelerates in Years 5 and 6 because teaching is good and learning moves on at a brisk pace. Results of national tests at the end of Year 6 show standards have generally been above average in the four years to 2006. In 2006, they were broadly average in English, above average in mathematics and well above average in science. Pupils' performance in 2007 shows a similar picture and an improvement in English. The school has well established procedures for tracking pupils' progress through the school. The progress in Years 3 and 4 has been clearly identified as an issue, though the school's actions to remedy this have not proved effective enough. More recent actions by the new headteacher, who is monitoring pupils' progress closely, are already having a positive impact.

Pupils' personal development is good. In tune with the school's Christian tradition, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils develop a clear understanding of right and wrong, and behave well in class and around the school. There are close links with the church and community; for example, pupils took their gifts to the harvest service to help others. They have a clear understanding of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and are keen to join in the school's monthly walk. They learn how to keep safe and all the older pupils complete a water safety course. The many responsibilities pupils take in school, such as being a school councillor, and their confidence in talking to adults and the good standards achieved in basic skills, prepare them well for the future.

Teaching is good overall. It is particularly strong in Key Stage 1 and at the end of Key Stage 2 where expectations are high. Here, learning moves at a rapid pace and work is well matched to the needs of different groups. Planning is inconsistent across Key Stage 2 and the lack of clearly focussed objectives in some lessons hinders the effectiveness of some teaching, especially in Years 3 and 4.

The curriculum is good. Pupils talked about their enjoyment of the practical aspects of their science lessons which help them to understand and reach a high standard. There is a good range of visitors and visits, including a residential trip, to enhance the curriculum. All pupils in Key Stage 2 have the opportunity to learn French and the half-termly enrichment days add to pupils' enjoyment of a range of topics.

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. All the statutory procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place. There is a good level of support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or

disabilities, and so they achieve well. The school has effective links with other agencies. These have been used well to enable the school to provide skilled support for the small number of pupils at an early stage of learning English and so they are making good progress. The school has good procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress but they are not always used effectively enough to remedy identified areas of concern.

Leadership and management are good. The new headteacher has quickly got to know the school and is expecting staff to be more rigorous in their use of assessment information to improve progress for individual pupils. All adults treat each other and the pupils with respect, and this provides a good example for pupils to follow. The school's analysis of its work is accurate in every respect, though the steps taken to improve its provision have not always been effective in the past. However, actions already taken by the new leadership, such as closely monitoring the progress of those pupils who have made satisfactory rather than good progress, indicate the school has good capacity to improve further. The school sets challenging targets for its pupils, and there has been clear improvement in writing since the last inspection. The school is well supported by its governors who have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and needs.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage (Reception class) is good. Children enter the school with a range of skills that are typical for their age. They make good progress so the majority of children reach standards that are usually above the expectation for their age, particularly in reading. Good teaching, based on a good understanding of how young children learn, and effective use of regular assessments enable all children to achieve well. The curriculum is good. It is suitably based on a wide range of practical activities and children enjoy the interesting outdoor area. Children are cared for and supported well. The new procedures for introducing children to school help them settle quickly.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the progress of pupils in Years 3 and 4.
- Make more effective use of information about pupils' progress to promote greater consistency in standards across subjects.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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?	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	2

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?	2
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	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	2
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

5 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Banks St Stephens' C E School, Lancashire, PR9 8BL

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. I was impressed by your good behaviour and your politeness that help to make St Stephen's such a friendly place to be. I particularly enjoyed talking to the school council and spending time with the Reception children in their interesting outdoor area.

I agree with you that St Stephen's is a good school. You play a full part in this as you come regularly to school and work hard whilst you are there. Teaching is good and so you learn well. You told me that you particularly like the practical science lessons which help you reach a very good standard in science. The standards you achieve in English and mathematics are generally good, though this varies from year to year. Sometimes you do better in English and, in other years, standards in mathematics are higher.

You are able to take part in a good range of activities after school and you enjoy the school trips. I was also interested to hear about your monthly school walk, which sounds a good way of keeping healthy. The school takes good care of you and all adults give you a lot of help when you need it. The responsibilities you have in school, such as line monitors, together with your good literacy and numeracy skills, prepare you well for the future.

To make St Stephens even better, I have asked the school to use all the information it has about your work to help you make good progress in every class and to do equally well in English and mathematics.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Herring

Lead Inspector