

Higham St John's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119387
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313278
Inspection date	1 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Kathleen McArthur

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	134
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Gary Fox
Headteacher	Mrs Heather Hodson
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2003
School address	Higham Hall Road Higham Burnley Lancashire BB12 9EU
Telephone number	01282 772376
Fax number	01282 772376

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The Inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- pupils' achievement
- the quality of teaching and learning
- the quality of the provision for children in the Foundation Stage.

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data, lesson observations and pupils' books. Discussions were held with staff, pupils and governors and the parents' questionnaires were scrutinised. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail. The inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, given in its self-evaluation were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This small school serves a rural village, and around three quarters of the pupils travel to the school from a wide area. Nearly all are of White British heritage and all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about half the national average, but a higher than average proportion has a statement of special educational need. Pupils are taught in classes containing two year groups. The school has been awarded the National Healthy School standard, the Football Charter mark and a Basic Skills Quality mark.

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 outstanding features in pupils' personal development and care, guidance and support. The outstanding leadership from the headteacher successfully implements the school's stated aim 'to develop children to their full potential within a safe, happy and creative environment and is supported by the calm Christian ethos'. Pupils flourish, gain a love of learning and become mature and responsible members of the community, with high levels of care and concern for others. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive. One comment summed up the views of many, 'The school provides a safe, caring atmosphere which encourages children to develop both educationally and as caring young people'. This strong relationship between home and school enhances the very high quality of care that pupils receive in school.

Pupils achieve well throughout the school. They make good progress, particularly in the Foundation Stage and Years 5 and 6. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress well because of the effectiveness of the individual support they receive. Standards have been consistently above average at the end of both key stages since 2005. In the 2007 tests, pupils met challenging targets, reaching standards above the national average at the end of Key Stage 2. They did particularly well in English at the higher level and exceeded their targets, but slightly fewer than usual reached higher levels in mathematics and science. Tracking information shows that pupils currently in Year 6 are well on track to meet their targets in 2008, reflecting their good progress in English, mathematics and science. The 2007 results at Key Stage 1 dipped slightly to average but this still represents good progress and achievement for this cohort of pupils.

Pupils are clearly very happy in school because they say, 'everybody cares for each other' and, 'it's easy to make friends'. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils appreciate reflection times during worship and a strong feeling of respect and empathy was very apparent during a Harvest assembly. Pupils know just what they must do to be healthy and they feel very safe and well cared for. Behaviour is excellent and pupils willingly undertake a range of responsibilities around school. Buddies look after the little ones in the playground and monitors carefully ensure pupils move safely around the building. The school is very much part of church and village life and pupils frequently take part in community activities. They have a strong awareness of the wider world through links with a parish in Uganda. School councillors take their roles very seriously and know they make a valuable contribution by representing their classmates. Good educational standards and information and communication technology (ICT) skills together with excellent personal skills mean pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of learning and the future.

Teaching is good overall. Some outstanding teaching was observed during the inspection. Activities meet the needs of different abilities and age groups in each class effectively and teachers make good use of assessment information to plan work to stretch and challenge every pupil. When teaching is outstanding, the pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills in lessons which link different subjects together. This development of skills is clearly tracked through the lesson plans and recognises the needs of the different age and ability groups within the class. However, because teachers use different planning formats it is sometimes difficult to ensure that these key skills are being developed consistently. Skilled teaching assistants make a very strong contribution to learning and well-being, particularly for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Very good systems track and monitor academic progress closely

so staff know exactly where to intervene with extra help and support. Safeguarding procedures meet all current requirements.

The good curriculum provides a very broad education. An excellent range of activities enrich the curriculum and make a very strong contribution to pupils' cultural development. A very good programme of personal, social and health development ensures pupils have many opportunities to reflect on feelings and emotions. Provision for ICT has improved a great deal and pupils demonstrate good skills. The school is beginning to link subjects to make learning more purposeful. For example, Year 4 and Year 5 pupils linked history, literacy and ICT to create newspaper reports about Tutankhamen's tomb. Pupils are looking forward to following this by visiting a forthcoming exhibition in London. Pupils said how they really enjoy the different out-of-school activities.

The headteacher's commitment has inspired a continuing quest for school improvement. She is ably supported by the strong commitment of all members of the school community. Governance is good. Governors are very well led. They are well informed and make full use of their individual expertise to challenge and support the school. They work well with staff to ensure that each pupil is enabled to reach their full potential. Self-evaluation is accurate; the school knows itself well so improvement plans are appropriate. However, current plans cover many areas and some priorities could be more sharply defined. Professional development and performance management arrangements are rigorous. Resources are shrewdly and carefully managed so the school provides good value for money. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection and there is good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Foundation Stage with skills that are broadly typical for their age. Effective provision ensures they get off to a good start and make good progress, particularly in reading and writing and personal and social development. Children feel very safe and secure in the warm, welcoming atmosphere where they are very well cared for and they respond well, quickly learning to follow the simple routines. They happily share, take turns and become increasingly confident and independent when choosing from the different activities on offer. Good teaching provides an effective range of learning activities in class. Some activities take place in the attractive outdoor area, but children do not always get enough opportunities to consolidate and extend their learning by using the outside environment. By the time they move to Year 1, the very great majority of the children reach, and some exceed, the expected levels for their age in all areas of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make full use of the school grounds to provide regular opportunities for outdoor learning for Foundation Stage pupils.
- Ensure that pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are developed consistently from year to year.

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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?	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	2
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	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?	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?	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

2 November 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Higham St John's Church of England Primary School, Lancashire, BB12 9EU

Thank you for the wonderful welcome you gave me when I visited your school. You were all very friendly, polite and helpful so I really enjoyed my day with you. I was very impressed by the way you sang and danced and spoke in the Harvest Assembly. It was really good to see how well you care for each other, and your parents must be proud of your very good manners!

I could see how happy you are and you told me many things that you really like about your school. I thought you would like to know what I found.

- Higham St John's is a good school, where the teachers work very hard to make sure you have lots of interesting work and good activities that are fun.
- You work hard and make good progress to reach standards that are above average by the time you are ready to move on to your next school.
- Your personal development is excellent so you behave really well and grow into thoughtful and responsible young people.
- The school gives you outstanding care and you respond by looking after each other very well and by being very considerate of the needs of others.
- You have an excellent range of activities outside your lessons, like French, music and sports clubs.
- You have an excellent headteacher who is determined you will all do well.

To become even better, I have suggested that the school:

- provides the Reception children with more opportunities to use the outdoor learning areas more regularly
- makes sure you all build upon your learning year to year.

I know you will want to help them, and you can do this by continuing to work hard and trying your best in everything you do at school.

I send my best wishes to you all,

Kathleen McArthur

(Lead inspector)