

Banks Methodist School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119405
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313283
Inspection dates	18–19 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Judith Straw

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	39
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Brian Almond
Headteacher	Mrs Jean Morris
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2003
School address	Chapel Lane Banks Southport Merseyside PR9 8EY
Telephone number	01704 227323
Fax number	07104 227323

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a very small school where pupils are taught in two classes. The school is in a rural area. A small proportion of pupils attend from outside the immediate locality. The proportion of pupils entitled to claim a free school meal is average. All the children are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average.

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. There are some elements which are outstanding. Banks Methodist School is at the heart of the local community, a fact celebrated in their mission statement, 'growing together in the community'. Parents are unanimous in their praise, summed up by one parent who wrote, 'the staff are brilliant and the atmosphere is great'. Parents particularly value the family atmosphere, the welcome they receive in school and the good quality of education their children receive. The school promotes excellent links with parents through initiatives such as the 'Reading Together Records'. The quality of care and well-being of all pupils is excellent and is underpinned by the school's strong Christian ethos. The school has an accurate insight into its strengths and weaknesses and as a result is constantly improving and adapting its provision to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can.

Behaviour is good. Pupils respond positively to the family atmosphere and look after each other. Most are sensible and thoughtful. They know how to keep safe and try to be healthy. They enjoy all aspects of school and are proud of their achievements. They make an excellent contribution to the local community. Their confidence, key skills and good manners mean that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils achieve well in all areas of the school. Results of teachers' assessments and national tests show standards are above average in Years 2 and 6. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent as a result of the exemplary care, guidance and support that they receive. All the pupils thrive in the positive atmosphere of a community where learning is made enjoyable and the emphasis is on aiming high.

Teaching is good. All staff know their pupils very well and plan challenging and enjoyable lessons. The rich curriculum has recently been enhanced by a new emphasis on creativity which has earned the school a Learning Excellence Award for innovative practice.

Leadership and management are good at all levels. The headteacher motivates and inspires the entire team of teaching and support staff, and presides over a happy and successful school. Managers and governors have a clear understanding of how well the school is performing and where its priorities for improvement lie. The school's tracking systems ensure that pupils' progress is measured accurately and enables managers to set realistic but challenging targets so that most pupils achieve well. Governors are extremely supportive and carry out their duties diligently. The school has addressed matters raised at the last inspection and is well placed to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The quality of education in the Foundation Stage is good. Children enter Reception with a range of knowledge and skills that are generally below what is typical for this age although this varies year by year. New entrants to the school are made to feel welcome and soon make many friends. They settle quickly, enjoy school and, as a result, make good progress in all the required areas of learning. By the time they enter Year 1, most children have reached the expected levels. Parents feel very welcome and are fully involved in all aspects of their children's progress. Planning is good, and teachers use assessment information well to prepare new learning activities for the children. The care that children experience is exemplary. The curriculum meets the needs of this age group and includes a good range of opportunities to learn through

first hand activities. There is no permanent outdoor play area for the Foundation Stage and this restricts the extent to which children can extend their learning to the outdoors and especially engage in independent learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Broaden the curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage by creating a permanent outdoor play area.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils' progress is good. The very small number of pupils taking national tests each year means that the school's results cannot be compared reliably with national data. However, looking at the results of pupils at the end of both key stages for the last four years, the children have consistently reached above average standards and many have achieved better than had been predicted. Recognising that many pupils were weak in reading, the school has worked hard to improve reading and their strategies are succeeding. There is no difference in the overall attainment of girls and boys. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or difficulties make excellent progress and achieve particularly well. The school has developed excellent strategies to support and guide these pupils. As one parent wrote, 'with so much attention for each child, how could they not thrive?'

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils say they really enjoy school and feel safe knowing they can trust all the adults with whom they come into contact. Behaviour is good and most pupils are sensible and thoughtful. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Attendance is consistently in line with the national average or just above. Pupils are proud of the school's recent award of Healthy School status and have achieved silver level as an ECO school. They can discuss all these initiatives with interest and enthusiasm. Pupils try to put into practice the good advice they receive about living a healthy life and keeping safe. They are adamant that there is no bullying at their school. School assemblies are appreciated by pupils and are they proud of their links with the local church and the wider community. They enjoy visiting local people and inviting them into school. Pupils engage in many fund-raising activities and actively support a Methodist school and an individual pupil in Uganda. The School Council is effective in representing the views of all the children and they are confident that the school listens and responds to their suggestions and comments. Good key skills, their quiet self-confidence and good manners all ensure that the pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is characterised by secure subject knowledge, lively, well-prepared lessons, delivered with pace and humour, excellent relationships and good resources. Teachers know their pupils very well indeed and use this knowledge to plan lessons which allow every child to develop at their own pace. A particular strength is the use of highly trained and well-briefed teaching assistants in the mixed classes who support individual pupils and small groups so that each

child receives plenty of attention. All pupils are given their own targets to help them to improve their work and these are regularly reviewed. Assessment procedures are built into lesson plans so that pupils know what they have to do and how far they have succeeded. There are no obvious weaknesses in teaching but sometimes involvement in practical activities and independent learning are restricted by lack of space.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

All the requirements of the National Curriculum are met. The Foundation Stage curriculum has a good focus on enjoyment and learning through play but the lack of a permanent outdoor area restricts extending learning to the outdoors. The school has just introduced French at both key stages and pupils enjoy trying out their new skills. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is good and pupils use computers in most lessons. Good provision for pupils' personal development is offered in a lively and interesting personal, social, health and citizenship course. The school has sustained a richness in the curriculum and the afternoon focussing on creativity is popular with adults and children alike. Pupils experience a wide range of activities such as gardening, photography, cooking, craft-work, puppet-making and many others. Teachers, parents, governors and local volunteers come into school to assist in these activities. The curriculum is further enhanced by many visits, visitors who give talks and demonstrations and after-school clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The Christian ethos, safe environment and excellent relationships across the school reflect the outstanding care, guidance and support given to all children. This gives pupils the will to succeed and the confidence to try. Arrangements for safeguarding and protecting pupils are robust. Training is up to date and staff know what to do in an emergency. Risks are dealt with very well because of the rigorous procedures and monitoring. Academic guidance and support are effective. Challenging targets are established for each pupil and progress is very effectively tracked. Individual plans for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are exemplary. Targets are very specific and, when one is reached, another is set so that these pupils achieve extremely well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher gives very good leadership in all areas of the life of the school. She leads by example in promoting good teaching which leads to good academic standards and achievement. Other teachers give very good support and all work together to maintain the traditions and values of this small village school. Leadership is committed to staff development at all levels and this is very much a learning community. The school ensures that all pupils have full access to every aspect of the curriculum. Governance is good. The governors are fully involved in the life of the school and visit frequently. They strike a good balance between supporting the school and encouraging it to do even better. Parents and pupils are consulted frequently and careful consideration is given to their views when management decisions are taken. As a result of this widespread collaboration, the school has an accurate picture of strengths and where

improvements can be made. The school is in a good position to move forward and provides good value for money.

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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?	1
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	1

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	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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

20 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Banks Methodist School, Lancashire, PR9 8EY

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited you in school this week. I very much enjoyed meeting you and talking to so many of you. I have used some of the things you told me to write this report.

You said that you were very happy at school and enjoyed all the activities. I could see this for myself. The teachers make sure you work hard in lessons but also enjoy them. I liked the way you all look after each other and are kind to each other. You are trying hard to follow the good advice you hear about living a healthy life and keeping safe. I could see how proud you are about achieving the silver level as an ECO school. Good luck in your efforts to achieve the gold award next. I was impressed by the displays of your work in the creativity afternoon and the art clubs. I liked the way the older pupils took on many responsibilities setting up equipment at break and lunch time and making sure no one is left out. The teachers make sure that you are very well cared for and anyone who needs a little extra help receives it.

I have asked the teachers and governors to provide you with a permanent 'outdoor classroom' where children in Reception can regularly take their learning outside and have more space.

Good luck in the future and continue to look after each other.

Judith Straw

Inspector