

Nelson St Philip's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119437
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313293
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Onyon

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	132
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Audrey Emmott
Headteacher	Mrs Kathryn Ellidge
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Leeds Road Nelson Lancashire BB9 9TQ
Telephone number	01282 614463
Fax number	01282 611823

Age group	4-11
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2008
Inspection number	313293

© 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 one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Philip's Primary School is smaller than average and serves a challenging area with very high levels of social disadvantage. A very high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Most pupils are of minority ethnic heritage and many have English as an additional language. Skill levels on entry to the Reception class are very low. The proportion identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. There are a small number of looked after children. There have been a number of changes of staff over the last two years and the headteacher has been in post for ten months.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

While there are clear signs that this is an improving school, evidence of pupils' underachievement remains and the inspection does not support the school's judgement that its overall effectiveness is satisfactory. In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to raising standards and pupils' achievements in English, mathematics and science; the consistent use of assessment information to plan the next steps in pupils' learning; and the involvement of subject leaders in monitoring and evaluating the impact of strategies to raise standards. Because of this, the school's effectiveness and the value for money provided are inadequate.

The school has gone through a turbulent period. As a result of illness and retirement there have been a number of changes in staff. This lack of continuity has had an adverse effect on pupils' progress in their learning. It has also contributed to a decline in standards which are now significantly below average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils have made too little progress over time and until recently, underachievement has not been tackled effectively. As a result, the school has made insufficient progress since the last inspection. With good support from the local authority, strenuous efforts are now being made to reverse the decline in standards and improve provision. Staff and governors are united in their determination to raise standards. Some of the actions taken are already having a positive effect. For example, the quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage has improved significantly and is good. In Years 1 to 6, the quality of teaching and learning is now satisfactory and this is helping pupils to make sound progress. However, there are weaknesses in the opportunities given for pupils to learn independently. Teachers do not consistently use marking and the outcomes of the greatly improved assessment system to carefully plan the next steps in pupils' learning. Opportunities are missed to set challenging targets and guide pupils to do better. Similarly, assessment information is not used enough to ensure a suitable level of challenge in their work and promote consistently good progress. As a result, pupils are not catching up lost progress quickly enough.

As a result of recent improvements in planning, the curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy taking part in a wide range of activities and visits. There are strong links with the community which enhance learning. A satisfactory level of care, support and guidance is provided. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' personal development although the strong faith ethos contributes to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Good pastoral care ensures pupils feel safe in school and are confident that they could turn to a member of staff if they have any concerns. They are aware of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. Behaviour is good. Despite strenuous efforts made by the school to improve attendance it is currently just below average, largely as a result of a number of extended absences to visit families in Pakistan.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Since her appointment, the headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has set a clear direction for the school. Governors are supportive and, in partnership with the headteacher, focused on raising standards. There is a good working relationship between staff and the governing body. The school knows that improvement is needed and that pupils can do better. The newly formed leadership team has recognised the right ways to go forward. Many aspects of their self-evaluation are accurate

although they have too optimistic a view of how far they have come. Subject leaders for English, mathematics and science have a good grasp of what must be done to improve pupils' achievements but do not check on the actions taken rigorously enough. Though the effectiveness of the school has declined since the previous inspection, recent improvements demonstrate a sound capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Reception class with levels of skills which are very low, particularly in speaking and listening and physical development. They have poor personal and social skills especially in terms of relating to each other and to adults. Children settle quickly into well established routines and clearly enjoy coming to school. Within a caring atmosphere, the children develop self-confidence and are learning to become increasingly independent. Though they make good progress in all the areas of learning, their skills and abilities are still well below national expectations by the time they enter Year 1. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff ensure that there is a wide range of well focused activities to promote learning. The school's drive to improve children's reading skills is evident in the way the sounds of letters and words are taught systematically. Resources are adequate but provision for outside activities is constrained by the limitations of the building and playground area. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good and the overall quality of the children's experiences provides a secure basis for their future learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement and raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Use assessment information consistently to plan the next steps in pupils' learning so that they are appropriately challenged and make good progress.
- Ensure subject leaders rigorously monitor the impact of actions taken to improve pupils' achievements.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Standards are well below average in English, mathematics and science, and pupils' achievement over time has been inadequate. In 2007, the overall outcomes of assessments for Year 2 pupils were very low. Reading and mathematics are particular weaknesses with a significant number of pupils entering Year 3 not achieving the expected levels for seven-year-olds. Many pupils in Years 3 to 6 struggled with mathematics and did not achieve as well as they should because of weaknesses in calculation and problem solving. Whilst achievement in reading and writing was better, not enough pupils reached the standard expected for their age. The school's Year 6 test results were significantly below the national average in English, mathematics and science. The progress made by these pupils was poor and the school did not meet its targets. Recent action has successfully improved the quality of teaching and pupils are now making satisfactory progress in lessons. The school recognises that the achievements of girls are much better than boys and is beginning to successfully address the issue with tasks appropriately aimed at closing the gap. Pupils learning English as an additional language, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and looked after children now make satisfactory progress because of the extra support they receive. However, considerably underachievement remains.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Imaginative and effective strategies are in place to raise attendance and to challenge extended absences. These are having a positive effect although overall attendance remains just below average. Pupils develop satisfactory attitudes to learning because they can see that the staff who teach them are interested in helping them to make progress. However, in some classes some pupils remain reluctant to answer teachers' questions. Pupils say they enjoy school and that they feel safe and have someone to turn to if they have a problem. Behaviour is good overall because of the positive ethos of the school. Pupils know and understand what is expected of them. Incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly and there are no recorded cases of racism. Pupils talk knowledgeably about healthy eating and enjoy taking part in sporting activities, reflecting the school's Healthy Schools Award. Playground games successfully develop good attitudes to exercise. Initiatives such as taking responsibility as play leaders are enjoyed by the pupils. Pupils say their views are valued. The school council promotes a good sense of citizenship and pupils are proud to represent 'their' school. However, pupil involvement in setting targets to help them improve further is at a very early stage. Opportunities are provided for pupils to find out about life outside school but the well below average academic standards do not prepare pupils well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Pupils make sound progress in lessons. Positive relationships and good organisation are strong features of most of the teaching but a common weakness is that some of the work is over-directed and pupils are not being encouraged to take enough responsibility for their own learning. When pupils take part in practical activities the quality of learning is better. Recent improvements ensure that a satisfactory emphasis is given to developing basic literacy and numeracy skills with additional time given to reading and writing. In literacy and mathematics lessons, teachers have begun to make use of assessment information to group pupils according to their ability. However, the information is not used consistently to effectively plan the next steps in pupils' learning, to ensure good progress and appropriate challenge. Teaching assistants are thoughtfully engaged to guide and encourage pupils and ensure that those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities play a full part in the lesson. Teachers mark work but sometimes there is no guidance on what pupils need to do next to improve their work. As a result, pupils are not challenged sufficiently and their work is not always well presented.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Previous weaknesses in the planning for English and mathematics have contributed to pupils' underachievement. Recent changes and improvements have ensured that pupils are now offered a satisfactory, broad and balanced range of activities. In addition, the school has started to link pupils' learning in different subjects together to make it more meaningful. Provision in information and communication technology has improved since the previous inspection. However, it is too early for these changes made to have an impact on overall standards. The curriculum

makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. There is a good range of activities that enrich the curriculum, for example, weekly French lessons and the good use of a visiting music specialist to ensure that music plays an important part in pupils' experiences. A residential visit is organised and this helps the pupils to develop their personal and social skills. Visitors, including local religious leaders, bring their own expertise and experiences to help pupils' understanding. Pupils talk enthusiastically about these opportunities. A good range of out-of-school clubs enhance pupils' enjoyment of learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides good pastoral support. Pupils feel safe and secure in school telling the inspector that, 'If we have worries there is always someone we can talk to'. Child protection requirements and safeguarding procedures are clear and understood by all staff. Health and safety procedures are properly underpinned by risk assessments, enabling pupils to undertake activities safely both on and off school premises. Parents are pleased with the care their children receive, and are right in their view that the school takes good personal care of their children. The school has good procedures to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils, especially those with emotional difficulties and this helps them to successfully face and begin to overcome their difficulties. Pupils of different ethnic backgrounds are integrated fully into the life of the school. The school has greatly improved its assessment systems in relation to pupils' academic progress. This has already proved to be useful by highlighting pupils who are making inadequate progress. However, the use of the information to make a significant impact on pupils' progress is still in its infancy and as such is not fully effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership team is now more focused on raising standards and there are clear signs of improvement. With the support of the local authority, systems have been put in place leading to measurable improvements in pupils' progress. The school judges its self-evaluation systems and overall effectiveness to be satisfactory and this is understandable in the light of the recent improvements. As a team the head and deputy head have a clear view of what needs to be improved and there are increasingly effective systems to check how well improvements are taking place. However, the impact of improvements to pupils' achievement is only just beginning to show through and consequently overall effectiveness remains inadequate. Until recently there has not been enough emphasis on rigorously evaluating the progress individual pupils make so that effective action could be taken if progress was not good enough. Subject leaders have a sound understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their areas. However, they do not rigorously monitor and evaluate the impact of any actions taken to improve standards to ensure success. Governors are committed to the school and focused on bringing about improvement. The school is heading in the right direction and has satisfactory capacity to improve.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
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?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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	3

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

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	4
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	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

14 March 2008

Dear Children,

Inspection of Nelson St Philip's Church of England Primary School, Lancashire, BB9 9TQ

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed listening to what you had to say and was pleased to hear how much you enjoy school. It was great to hear you singing your Easter songs and to see how well you all get on together in the playground and around school. I agree with you that your teachers are kind and helpful and that they care for you and listen to what you have to say. You behave well and the school makes sure you are safe. All the staff are really helpful when problems arise. There have been recent improvements in lessons and the ways that teachers plan work for you that mean that you are now making satisfactory progress. However, many of you are not being helped to do as well as you could.

Although it has improved recently, there are still some important things the school needs to do to help you all to achieve your very best in all your work. As a result, I have said that the school needs something called a 'Notice to Improve'. This means that inspectors will visit the school again within the next twelve months to check that things are continuing to improve. To make things better, your teachers will be checking how well you are doing and using this information to plan lessons that are challenging and help you get learn more quickly. I have asked the teachers to look very carefully at how successfully they are introducing new ways to learn.

You can do your bit by really trying your best at all times and continuing to enjoy all the opportunities that your school offers you.

Good luck and very best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Onyon

Lead inspector