

Halsall St Cuthbert's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119480
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313311
Inspection date	22 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Brian Dower

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	127
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rvd Paul Robinson
Headteacher	Mr Doug Scholes
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2004
School address	New Street Halsall Ormskirk Lancashire L39 8RR
Telephone number	01704 840253
Fax number	01704 841427

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following: the rigour of the school's self-evaluation processes; the progress pupils are making in their work; their ability to write well in all subjects to raise standards in English; their self-reliance, confidence and their ability to work independently; the school's assessments and tracking of pupils' progress.

Evidence was gathered from: discussions with pupils, the headteacher, other staff and the chair of governors; observations of parts of lessons; analysis of school documentation including the school's self-evaluation; samples of pupils' work; the parental questionnaire returns. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection 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

St Cuthbert's Church of England Primary is a popular school. It is smaller than average but its roll has been increasing steadily. All pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average, as is that of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The incidence of pupils joining or leaving the school at times other than the normal start or end of an academic year is low.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

All who work in this outstanding school are rightly proud of what the pupils achieve. It is a welcoming and caring place in which to learn, where working relationships are founded in Christian beliefs and values. Staff and governors are committed to making a real difference to pupils' lives and succeed in raising their aspirations and preparing them very well for their future education.

Standards over time in reading, writing, mathematics and science have been above average at the end of Years 2 and 6 and in some years significantly so. The progress pupils make and their levels of achievement have been excellent. The school's own assessment records and the quality of the work pupils are doing now, including the work of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, show that progress remains exceptional. Standards in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are high and the work done in art and design technology is impressive. Pupils write well in their literacy lessons and the school is now focused on refining those writing skills in all subjects.

Pupils are confident and self-reliant. They are sensitive to each other's feelings and understand that with rights come responsibilities both for themselves and others in their community and beyond. Consideration for those less fortunate than themselves is demonstrated through charitable work and fund raising activities. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral and social development, is outstanding. Their cultural development is good. They have an understanding of their own culture but their contact with people from cultures other than their own is limited and therefore their awareness of the diversity of British life is less well developed. Behaviour is excellent and pupils say there is no bullying in the school. Attendance rates are above average and pupils enjoy coming to school. There are close links with the church and pupils play a full part in local activities such as the community summer carnival, bonfire night and the preservation of the nature area, Bishop's Walk. Pupils understand the importance of keeping fit and well, and they eat healthily and take plenty of exercise. The older pupils undertake responsibility by helping to care for the younger children and as their reading partners. School council representatives ensure that pupils have a voice in the school's development. They have been influential in securing improvements in the cloakrooms, more games and playground activities and a new outdoor activity trail. Pupils are exceptionally well placed to make the most of the next stage of their education because they have been taught to learn from mistakes and given extensive opportunities to experience success.

Exceptional teaching and outstanding work by the teaching assistants were seen during the inspection and corroborated the school's own evaluation that classroom practice and pupils' learning are excellent. Pupils are keen to learn and have the ability to concentrate for extended periods of time. They know how well they are doing and what they must do to get better. This is because marking is done regularly and teachers and teaching assistants spend a lot of time talking to pupils about their work and how they can use their learning targets to improve. Pupils make very good use of ICT to support their independent learning and the varied activities inside and outside of school broaden their understanding of the wider world. Teachers' lesson planning takes account of the wide age and ability range in each class and the teaching assistants are skilled in challenging and extending the most able pupils and supporting and guiding pupils when difficulties arise. This was seen in a lesson on measurements with the younger pupils where the teacher's and the assistants' supportive and encouraging approach led to excellent progress. Such excellent care and support are characteristic of all lessons and is the reason why

pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who might be vulnerable in any way make such exceptional progress in their personal and academic development.

Pupils benefit from an excellent curriculum. There is a balance between academic and creative subjects and activities, and a wide range of extra-curricular activities to extend pupils' understanding and enjoyment of the work they do in lessons. There are, for example, trips out of school to explore the area's rich natural environment and many visiting speakers from outside agencies. Music is taught by a visiting specialist and the older pupils learn Spanish. There is excellent provision for the teaching of basic skills. Pupils' progress is monitored closely and appropriate provision made when weaknesses are uncovered.

Leadership, management and governance are outstanding. Governors are fully involved in the life of the school, know the pupils and their families well and play their part in forward planning. They work closely with the headteacher who is providing excellent leadership. Staff work effectively as a team. They share a clear vision for the future success of the school and are determined to give every pupil the best start to their education. Morale is high. Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate and built upon wide consultation. Good use is made of individual performance targets for each pupil to raise standards. Resources, accommodation and staffing are used extremely well to the benefit of all pupils. Child protection procedures are in place, safety audits are conducted on a regular basis and risk assessments are carried out for all activities, particularly for trips away. There have been noticeable improvements since the previous inspection, particularly in the use of assessment procedures for monitoring pupils' progress and planning lessons. The school is therefore very well placed to build upon current achievements.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children come from varied social and economic backgrounds and start at the school with a wide range of capabilities and attitudes. Judged over time, their knowledge and skills on entry are broadly typical for children of that age. Most make excellent progress in the Reception Year and by the time they enter Year 1 have exceeded levels expected of pupils of this age. This is because of consistently good and often outstanding teaching, care and support. Very effective induction procedures mean that children feel welcome, settle quickly and soon feel happy and secure. Their progress is monitored carefully and additional support given if needed. The classroom and the outside environment already afford exceptional opportunities for children to explore, play and learn together safely and these will be enhanced by the opening of a new Foundation Stage suite of rooms and play area. Learning activities are varied and stimulating, and secure children's independence and development. There is an effective balance between activities led by adults and those chosen by the children, and staff are adept at engaging children in conversation, discussing their activities and moving them on in their thinking. The school is providing children with an excellent start to their education and this is recognised and appreciated by parents. 'As soon as you enter the school you feel the happiness from the children. I couldn't ask for a better way for my children to start their education.'

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no major issues additional to those already identified in the current school improvement plan.

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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	2
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	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

23 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Halsall St Cuthbert's Church of England Primary School, Lancashire, L39 8RR

Thank you for the warm welcome I received when I inspected your school. I enjoyed the day I spent with you and only wished I had had more time to see all the interesting things you are doing. I would have liked to have visited Bishop's Walk and seen the result of the conservation work you are doing. Many of you spoke about how much you enjoy your lessons, as well as the breaks and lunch hour with friends. I was impressed by how hard you work and how you get on so well together. Please thank your parents for sending in the questionnaire returns. Their comments have been helpful.

St Cuthbert's is providing you with an excellent education. You make rapid progress and achieve above average standards. There are many interesting things for you to learn in lessons and you are enthusiastic about the after school clubs and activities and the trips away. You are well cared for and you said that you are known and valued as individuals by all who work in the school. You particularly appreciate the encouragement you get from your teachers and the sympathetic support and help from the teaching assistants. The way you are developing as confident and independent minded young people is excellent and you have the skills and personal qualities to make the most of the next stage of your education when you move on to secondary school.

Your teachers and the assistants will be working to make your education even better than it is now and these developments are in the school's improvement plan. You are aware of the improvements that have been made already for the youngest children with the impressive new building. By the time you read this, the Reception class children will be enjoying those new facilities.

Thank you again for making my visit so enjoyable. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Dower

Lead inspector