

St Gabriel's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119501
Local Authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	313319
Inspection date	9 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Geoffrey Yates

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	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Norman Reeve
Headteacher	Mrs Belinda Haigh
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2003
School address	Wilworth Crescent Blackburn Lancashire BB1 8QN
Telephone number	01254 249462
Fax number	01254 249062

Age group	4-11
Inspection date	9 October 2007
Inspection number	313319

© Crown copyright 2007

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. The Inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the progress of higher attaining pupils at Key Stage 2; the school's efforts to ensure pupils used their basic skills well in other subjects; and the use of assessment information. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected 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 except that the judgements about pupils' personal development and the care the school provides were too modest.

Description of the school

The school is average in size. It serves an area of private housing. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those eligible for free school meals are below average. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are a small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups, but none is at the early stage of learning English.

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 where pupils achieve well. The headteacher provides highly effective leadership and management that leave no stones unturned in the quest for continuous improvement. As a result, the school is very well placed to become even better. There is a strong Christian ethos within the school and, consequently, a strong commitment to making every pupil feel valued. As a result, the care the school provides and pupils' personal development are outstanding. Parents are very pleased with the quality of education the school offers. As one parent commented, ' St Gabriel's is a wonderful school where I can feel confident that the teaching team really cares for my child.'

Standards in the school's 2006 national tests and assessments at the end of Years 2 and 6 were above average in English, mathematics and science and have been for a number of years. The school's results in the national tests in 2007 point to high standards. More than 50% of the cohort achieved higher than the expected level in English. Standards of work seen during the inspection were similarly high. Even though the proportions of pupils attaining high levels are usually above average, there has been a small group of pupils who have not achieved as highly as they should in the last two years. The school has taken decisive action. There is now a robust approach to the use of assessment information to highlight very early any signs of underachievement and to implement effective action. For example, extra lessons in mathematical problem solving are currently provided to accelerate the progress of all pupils. The strategies introduced to ensure that higher attainers do as well as they can in English are proving to be highly effective.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils are friendly and thoughtful, very well behaved and responsible youngsters who are well prepared for secondary school and for their future lives. Pupils say they are very happy because, in the words of one pupil, the teachers make learning 'interesting and exciting'. Attendance is well above the national average which reflects pupils' enjoyment of school. The school provides a stimulating learning environment in which pupils get on really well with each other and with staff. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle and are very aware of the importance of taking regular exercise. School council members enjoy their tasks, take their work seriously and play an important part in the school. For example, they are passionate about the need to improve safety on the unadopted road outside the school grounds. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported so that they participate fully in lessons and other activities, and make good progress.

The curriculum is of a good quality. The emphasis on ensuring breadth in pupils' education adds to their achievements. The school is rightly proud of its outstanding range of out of school activities, its sporting success and strong musical traditions. A key factor in the school's success is good teaching and, as a consequence, good learning. Strengths in teaching include clear objectives, challenging tasks and the range of techniques used by teachers to help make learning enjoyable. As a result, pupils thoroughly enjoy lessons and other activities. Teachers with particular subject skills support each other in lessons, adding depth to pupils' learning. The improved use of accurate assessment information on pupils' progress enables teachers to give clear guidance to pupils about what they need to do to improve their work. Staff involve pupils in highlighting for themselves what they need to do to improve further. As part of the drive to raise standards in writing, teachers have rightly begun to focus on ensuring pupils use their good writing skills in other subjects. However, the impact of this curricular initiative has yet to

be fully realised and some of the written work pupils are asked to do in other subjects is undemanding.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher has the support of a very able leadership team who feel inspired by the high quality leadership given. Self-evaluation is accurate, but a little modest with regard to pupils' personal development and care. The school improvement plan is of a very high quality and identifies relevant priorities, who is responsible for these, and areas for long-term development. The governing body is well informed and knowledgeable. This is a school that provides good value for money and has addressed successfully the weaknesses found in the previous inspection.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children start school with skills that are above those typical for their age. They make good progress because teaching is of a good quality and firmly focused on children's needs. They settle well into school because of the high quality care and guidance they receive. Good use is made of the outside area to support learning. Strong emphasis is placed on the development of communication, language and literacy skills and on pupils' personal and social development. Children are given good opportunities to take responsibility and to develop independence, for example, by tidying up at the end of an activity without being told to do so. By the end of Reception, the majority of children have exceeded the levels expected for their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide regular challenging opportunities for pupils to use their good writing skills in other subjects.

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?	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	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	1
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?	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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
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

12 October 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Gabriel's Church of England Primary School, Blackburn with Darwen, BB1 8QN

Thank you for being so helpful to me when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed my time with you and seeing some of you in lessons. It was wonderful to hear the school orchestra play one of my favourite hymns as part of the school's act of worship. My lasting memory of the school is the way you all worked hard in lessons.

I promised your headteacher that I would let you know what I thought. I am pleased to tell you that I agree with her, and you, that your school gives you a good standard of education. You do well in lessons and in tests because you work hard and understand the importance of this for the future. Your teachers and other adults make lessons very interesting and, if you need help, you get it.

Your behaviour is excellent and I was very impressed with how polite you were. You benefit greatly from a large number of school clubs. You told me that you feel safe in school and that if a problem occurs an adult will sort it out quickly when you tell them about it.

There is just one thing I would like to happen to make your school even better. I want you to use your writing skills well, not just in English lessons but also in other subjects.

Keep on working hard so you can continue to play a major part in ensuring that your school continues to be highly regarded by all who come into contact with it.

Yours truly

Geoffrey Yates

Lead inspector