

Bolton-le-Sands Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119521
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313323
Inspection date	13 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Alastair Younger

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	293
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Denise Mace
Headteacher	Mr Tim Cross
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2004
School address	Mount Pleasant Lane Bolton-le-Sands Carnforth Lancashire LA5 8DT
Telephone number	01524 823606
Fax number	01524 823919

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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 issues in depth:

- the progress of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2
- the quality of teaching and learning in Key Stages 1 and 2
- the accuracy of self-evaluation.

Evidence was gathered through the observation of lessons, discussions with staff and pupils, the examination of pupils' work, school assessment data and documentation including the school's self-evaluation. The views of parents were taken into account. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated 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. These have been included, where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is situated in a thriving village which has little social or economic deprivation. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about half the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is a wonderful school. It is a delightful and vital part of the local community and is outstandingly effective in all aspects of its work. A strong Christian ethos shines brightly, resulting in the exceptional spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and enthusiasm for living life to the full. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school. The overwhelming majority of parents are full of praise. They express great confidence in the school's outstanding leadership and management, and the consistently strong teaching. This enables their children to make excellent progress and attain standards which, for many years, have been exceptionally high. These standards are matched by the inviting and exciting environment. This is secure, stimulating and celebratory, with vivid displays of pupils' excellent work, informative learning aids and a fabulous playground on which pupils play with energy and enthusiasm. A small number of parents would appreciate more information about what, and how well, their children are doing, but by any standard the school is doing everything it reasonably can to keep parents informed.

Staff closely and accurately monitor and evaluate everything the school does. This is checked by the exceptionally supportive governing body, whose members show a strong desire to maintain the highest possible standards. The quality of the process ensures that potential weaknesses are quickly identified and dealt with before they become problematic. Illustrating this is the high impact of initiatives to boost the reading skills of a small group of Year 2 pupils, perceived not to be making the progress expected of them. These have met with success and the approval of parents.

The Foundation Stage has had a long history of success. This means that children get off to a flying start, in both their learning and personal development. This is built upon with great effectiveness throughout the rest of their school life. In national assessments and tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, standards have been significantly above average in all subjects for three years running. In 2007, virtually all pupils in Year 6 reached the standard expected of their age group. In mathematics over a half of them reached above average standards and in English and science the figure was nearly three quarters. Progress is outstanding because children enter the Foundation Stage with skills typical for their age and leave Year 6 well above average. Each pupil receives high quality support and guidance to help them continue making progress. A few parents of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities express concern that their children need more support. They should be reassured by the fact that last year's results showed these pupils outperformed similar pupils nationally in English and mathematics.

The key to this is consistently high quality teaching. This enthuses pupils and generates excitement, enjoyment and participation in the wide range of activities and learning opportunities provided by the imaginative, carefully planned curriculum. A wide range of visits and visitors frequently takes learning out of the classroom and also strongly promotes pupils' personal development. Staff plan these activities confident in the knowledge that pupils will never let them down because behaviour is excellent. No misbehaviour of any description was seen during the inspection and staff and pupils report that it is very rare. This contributes enormously to pupils' safety and their great enjoyment of school. It is particularly heartening to see pupils of all ages playing together at break times, running around, having fun and living healthily, with smaller and younger children being looked after and supported by older ones through the 'Buddy' system and the kindness and consideration of all pupils.

Teachers keep a close eye on the progress pupils make and tailor their expectations to meet individual needs. Extra support arrives quickly to pupils experiencing difficulty and extra, harder work appears promptly for those deemed able to do it. Mixed age classes are successful because teachers plan very carefully, ensure that all pupils learn at their own level and that work is never repeated unnecessarily. A display of pupils' observations on why their school is special includes the comment from one that it is because 'teachers help people when they don't know what to do'.

The inspection confirms the school's self-evaluation of teaching as outstanding. Regular, perceptive and accurate monitoring of teaching by senior staff is constructive and supportive. A strength of teaching is the way in which pupils, from a very early age, are encouraged to assess their own progress, make it clear to teachers when they have not understood what they have been taught or let teachers know when they think they have done particularly well. Teachers are exceptionally good at inspiring interest and enthusiasm through their introductions to lessons; in this they are very much in tune with pupils. In some cases this is through maturity and experience, in others through youth and energy. Perceptive recruitment by the governors has ensured a heady and healthy mix of both. One of the strengths of teaching is that by the end of teachers' lesson introductions, each pupil fully understands what is expected. This means that once they set about their tasks, pupils work with a lot of independence and very little waste of time.

In recognition of the fact that the school exists in a virtually mono-cultural area of a multicultural society, staff take every opportunity to broaden pupils' understanding of how people from other cultures and societies live. There are particularly strong links with a community in Uganda and there is a wealth of opportunities for pupils to celebrate other cultures through work in music, art and dance. This broadening of horizons, coupled with outstanding progress and personal development, stands pupils in excellent stead for bright futures in the wider world.

Everything is in place for this school to keep improving apace, as it has done since its last inspection. It has the overwhelming support of parents, it achieves high standards, the budget is in order and, most importantly, it has a highly skilled and dedicated staff.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage is outstanding. Children start school with levels of learning and development which are typical for their age. Outstanding teaching in a magnificent learning environment ensures they make rapid progress in all areas and are exceptionally well prepared for entering Year 1, having significantly exceeded the learning goals for children of their age. Every activity has purpose. Adult led activities strongly promote the learning of speaking, listening, reading, writing and number skills. Others promote independence and encourage children to learn through investigation, experience and play in a wide range of exciting indoor and outdoor settings. Leadership and management are exceptional. Leadership displays a wealth of wisdom and a firm determination to uphold the highest possible standards whilst ensuring that children have fun, and can learn and develop in a risk-free environment.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no areas for improvement.

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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?	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	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	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

14 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bolton-le-Sands Church of England Primary School, Lancashire, LA5 8DT

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I visit a different school each week to see how things are going. The good news for you is that everything is great.

You go to an outstanding school. What is more, it keeps getting better because it is so well led, managed and governed. You are getting on extremely well, learning a lot and behaving very well indeed. It is obvious that you enjoy school and work hard every day. It must be wonderful to go to a school where you are so well cared for.

I think your teachers enjoy school almost as much as you. Their skills help you to learn quickly and their enthusiasm helps you to enjoy this learning. Rest assured that you are being extremely well prepared for a bright future.

On my travels I try to make suggestions as to how schools could improve. That's tricky in a school like yours, where virtually everything is outstanding, but a few of your parents want to know more about how you're getting on so the school is going to look into this.

Work hard and have fun, just as you are already doing. Good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Alastair Younger

Lead inspector