

Lancaster Christ Church Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119532
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313327
Inspection dates	30 April –1 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Gordon Alston

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	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Phil Hudd
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Gardner
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2006
School address	Highfield Derwent Road Lancaster Lancashire LA1 3ES
Telephone number	01524 60955
Fax number	01524 60955

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized school takes pupils from a wide area where socio-economic conditions are broadly average. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is below average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly lower than that found in most schools. There are around 2% of pupils from minority ethnic heritages. An acting headteacher and an acting deputy are leading the school at present.

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. Although there has been considerable disruption caused by staffing issues, the school has successfully maintained its strengths in good teaching and strong pastoral care. The high level of care results in pupils' good personal development, which in turn contributes to good overall achievement. Pupils are very well behaved and courteous. Relationships are outstanding and the buzz of happiness echoing all round school reflects a proud motto 'Working Together We Succeed'. The school has the overwhelming support of parents whose industrious endeavours have created a rich learning environment. Typical comments made by parents included, 'The teaching staff and everyone involved at school are a huge strength with their dedication and commitment. They make school a caring, interesting place for my children to go. We are lucky to have such a great school for our children.'

Pupils enter Year 1 with broadly average standards, but there is a wide ability range. Achievement across the key stages is generally good and by the time they leave the school, pupils are reaching above average standards. Achievement is strongest in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2 achievement is weaker in mathematics and results have been relatively lower. The school is addressing this and standards in mathematics are rising.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school because they are well looked after and are provided with an interesting, creative curriculum. They feel very safe and secure. None of those who were asked could remember any incidents of bullying. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning are good; it is an improving picture as a result of rigorous monitoring and support by senior staff. Teachers create a very warm learning environment because of a genuine concern for pupils to do well. However, the clarity of pupils' targets and teachers' comments after marking pupils' work vary, and, as a result, pupils are not always given sufficient guidance on how to improve their work.

As a result of dedicated leadership, staff are enthusiastic and totally committed. It is a credit to all that the school continues to function so smoothly and effectively with so many temporary staff and leaders taking on acting roles. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well and is tackling areas for improvement professionally and with great diligence. The school promotes a strong Christian ethos. Governance is good. Governors are fully involved in the life of the school and effectively balance their roles of supporting the school and of holding it to account. The school is in a good position to maintain its strengths and develop further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter Reception with skills that are broadly typical for their age although there is a wide range and there are weaknesses in some aspects of language. The Reception class is a happy place where children enjoy their learning and achieve well. Parents say their children settle quickly because good induction arrangements help children to feel secure. Outstanding relationships create a supportive environment in which children can thrive. Children have time to explore things that interest them and to develop the independence to be confident learners. Occasionally, children lack purpose in their independent learning and, because the staff do not re-focus their activities quickly enough, children do not make as much progress as they could. The staff keep a close track on each child's progress and use this information well to plan what

children need to learn next. The school's data and observations of lessons show that children make good progress; most are on track to reach expected levels by the end of Reception.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the good progress pupils make in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 remains consistent throughout Key Stage 2, particularly in mathematics.
- Share good practice in marking and the setting of personal targets to ensure all pupils know how they can improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good and standards are above average. Achievement is consistently good from entry until the end of Year 2 but in Key Stage 2, although good overall, there is some inconsistency between classes. Standards by the end of Year 2 are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress due to very effective support from staff. In recent national tests at the end of Year 6, results in mathematics have been weaker than in English. The school recognises this and a number of successful remedial strategies have been put in place, for example, better questioning techniques in lessons and improved use of mathematical vocabulary. As a result progress in mathematics is quickening. The school has rightly identified the need to use problem solving activities to broaden the range of mental calculation techniques that pupils use, particularly in Key Stage 2.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school. By Year 6, they have extremely positive attitudes to learning. Parents say their children are eager to go to school. Attendance is usually above average. Pupils are polite and responsible; their behaviour is impeccable. Within a very caring, Christian community, relationships are excellent with pupils of all ages showing great respect for each other. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Thought provoking assemblies encourage pupils to think about why we are 'better together' and the celebration of festivals from many faiths helps pupils to learn about other cultures. Pupils know how to make healthy choices in the food they eat and the exercise they take. They feel safe at school and they know about dangers out of school. Class jobs, the school council and special responsibilities carried out by the oldest pupils are examples of how pupils make a strong contribution to the school community. They also contribute to the church and wider community, such as raising money for charity. Well developed personal qualities and solid academic skills equip pupils well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

A productive classroom atmosphere prevails throughout the school, and teaching and learning are good. This is largely because relationships are excellent and teachers usually employ a variety of approaches to interest and fully engage the pupils. Teachers plan lessons well and explain clearly what pupils of all abilities are to learn with clear instructions, so pupils know

exactly what is expected of them. Teachers enhance the presentation of lessons by using information and communication technology (ICT) and through the appropriate use of resources that frequently provide a practical dimension to the work. Classes are managed well through an energetic and compelling style. This results in a strong pace for learning. Occasionally, in the weaker but nevertheless satisfactory lessons, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to actively participate in the discussion at the start of lessons. At other times the pace of learning is slow and pupils achieve less in the time available. Marking is regular but not always helpful in pointing out how pupils could do better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a broad and relevant curriculum that meets the needs and interests of pupils well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a clearly structured overall plan which ensures that a wide range of activities are undertaken and that there is progression in learning for pupils throughout the school. Pupils benefit greatly from 'themed' events, for example, 'Super learning days' or a Key Stage 1 focus on the works of author Katie Morag. The school ensures that pupils are introduced to, and develop an understanding of, cultures other than their own through the celebration of special days from different religions. The curriculum is greatly enriched by an extensive range of well attended extra-curricular activities. Pupils say they particularly enjoy opportunities to play sport and meet pupils from other schools in tournaments. To broaden pupils' experiences, great emphasis is placed on educational visits, including a residential visit for older pupils and visitors to the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Very good levels of pastoral care are founded on very positive relationships between the staff, pupils and their families. Vulnerable pupils are well supported, such as those who have disabilities and those who attend the 'Pyramid Club' because they need a boost to their confidence. Effective links with outside agencies ensure pupils have extra support when needed. Pupils say they feel safe in school. The school provides a secure environment where the required safeguarding procedures are in place. Academic guidance is satisfactory. The school checks pupils' progress frequently, so staff can identify pupils who are falling behind and take action to support them. However, although pupils have learning targets in English and mathematics, pupils' awareness of them or how these can help them to improve their work is inconsistent between classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leaders are guiding the school effectively through a period of ongoing change. Their dedication is seen in their determination to sustain the school's many strengths, whilst tackling areas in which pupils' achievement needs to improve further. Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate, helping leaders to identify and tackle key weaknesses, for example, in improving standards in mathematics. The quality of pupils' learning in lessons is monitored carefully and appropriate action has been taken to raise all teaching to the level of the best. All these strengths put the school in a good position to improve further. Governors provide considerable support, have a

good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are not afraid to ask challenging questions. Targets in national tests at the end of Year 6 are usually met. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The school gives 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?	2
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?	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	2
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	2
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?	2

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	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

2 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lancaster Christ Church Church of England Primary School, Lanchashire, LA1 3ES

After spending two days in your school, we want to thank you all so much for making the experience a very enjoyable one. Your excellent behaviour and relationships are a credit to you all.

Well, what did we think after our inspection? I know your teachers were worried about inspectors coming, but I hope our report will help them feel all their hard work is worthwhile, because our judgement is that Christ Church C of E is a good school. I always ask children for their views of the school and one pupil said, 'It's wicked – I really look forward to meeting my friends and wonder what we're going to learn each day'. We agree. Your school is a friendly, happy place to be. You have very committed adults who work in your school and place your well-being at the centre of all that happens. All the staff make teaching interesting and also make you work hard. As a result, you are learning lots in lessons. They try to make school enjoyable and exciting particularly through the many visits you go on and the lots of visitors who come to your school. We were pleased to see how hard you work, but equally important is how well you all get on. We saw lots of pupils who have responsibilities and carry them out very well. We were also very pleased to see all the clubs you have. You take regular exercise and sport is important to you.

I am sure your teachers always say, 'This is good but you could make it even better if you ...' Well, this is what we are saying to your school. To be even better, we have asked the school to make sure all pupils make consistently good progress particularly across all junior classes and especially in mathematics. Another improvement would be if all teachers make sure that you understand how you can do better through the comments they make after marking your work or with the targets that you are set. We know you like to have targets to try and achieve them. You may have some ideas of your own on how best targets can be shared and used with you and your parents.

Finally, we would like to thank you again and wish you and your teachers every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Gordon Alston

Lead inspector