

Kirkham St Michael's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119550
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313335
Inspection dates	12–13 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Ruth James HMI

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	195
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Keith Brockbank
Headteacher	Mrs Lesley Brookbanks
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2004
School address	School Lane Kirkham Preston Lancashire PR4 2SL
Telephone number	01772 683624
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Michael's Church of England Primary School is an average sized school. The large majority of pupils are White British and come from the town of Kirkham and its immediate surroundings. Children join the school with skills and understanding broadly typical for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, but more have statements of special educational need than is typically the case. Fewer children than average receive free school meals. The school has achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark, National Healthy Schools award, Activemark and Investors in People.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with good features. The buildings and environment are bright and welcoming with some attractive displays of pupils' work. The school's mission statement is 'Following Jesus together learning, growing and living', and Christian values permeate all aspects of the schools work. The curriculum is good and this contributes well to pupils' good personal development. Pupils are well cared for. Many parents are very supportive of the school and pleased with the quality of education, but a minority expressed concerns, particularly in relation to recent staffing difficulties.

Pupils make satisfactory but uneven progress throughout their time in school, leaving with standards that are about average overall. Girls do better than boys, often reaching above average standards. Standards in English have improved in recent years.

Pupils enjoy school and feel safe. They have the confidence to express their views. Attendance is very good. Behaviour observed in lessons and around school was good. The good curriculum is enhanced by themed weeks, many extracurricular activities including sports, and creative opportunities such as a band which pupils enjoy. Pupils have good opportunities to contribute to the community both in school and the wider community, particularly through the work of the church. They are encouraged to live the Christian values they are taught, for example through donating to charitable causes during Lent.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and some lessons are good. In the best lessons observed all pupils were actively engaged in challenging activities and made good progress. In other lessons work lacked challenge and the pace was slower so progress was satisfactory rather than good. Slower progress was observed in lessons in lower Key Stage 2 than elsewhere.

Leadership and management are satisfactory with some strengths. The headteacher has led a number of improvements since the last inspection. Approaches to the practice and recording of assessment, including assessment for learning, have been developed across the curriculum, as well as core subjects. The range and quality of resources for the Foundation Stage have improved, including outdoor play facilities. There is insufficient management focus on raising standards, especially for boys and in mathematics. The headteacher is shouldering many responsibilities in the short term. This, together with recent staffing difficulties, means that capacity to improve is satisfactory at the present time. Some judgments in the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness were overgenerous. Governance is satisfactory. Value for money is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The school places a clear focus on the planning of learning experiences that match appropriately with the children's age and stage of development. Robust baseline assessment of the children's abilities indicates that when they start in the Reception class, they possess levels of personal skills, attributes and abilities which are in line with those typically found in children of this age. Teaching is satisfactory. The most effective work occurs when the children work under the direct supervision of an adult. This applies, in particular, to the times when the whole class reviews what has been learned or carpet sessions where there is direct teaching and effective questioning of the children. Although the children who work independently enjoy their work, on occasion there

is a lack of urgency or pace and some tasks are left unfinished or abandoned, particularly by those children who are not supervised by an adult. Overall, the quality of the Foundation Stage provision enables the children to settle into and know school routines well, which helps them to develop their personal and social skills, and enables them to make satisfactory progress. By the time they enter Year 1, the vast majority of children have skills that are typical for their age in all areas of their learning. Accommodation and resources are of a good standard. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are satisfactory overall.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further, especially for boys and for all pupils in mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, especially in lower Key Stage 2.
- Increase the degree of challenge in all lessons to accelerate pupil progress.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The achievement of pupils is satisfactory and standards are average. The majority of children start school with levels of skill that are in line with those typically found in children of this age. They make satisfactory progress in the Reception class and, as a result, by the end of the Foundation Stage the vast majority attain the level of skills and understanding expected for their age in all areas of their learning. Satisfactory and often good progress is maintained at Key Stage 1 and standards achieved by Year 2 pupils in the 2007 national tests are above average in reading and writing, and average in mathematics. From Year 2 to Year 6 pupils make satisfactory progress, but this is not consistent from year to year. It is slower in lower Key Stage 2 than in Years 5 and 6. In the 2007 national tests, pupils in Year 6 achieved standards that were broadly average, but fewer pupils than expected achieved the higher Level 5 in mathematics. The school has not met all its targets in mathematics in recent years. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. Girls generally do better than boys throughout the school, often reaching above average standards. For example, in the 2007 national tests over half the girls achieved the higher Level 5 in English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils take pride in their work, which is widely displayed around the school. Pupils know what they should eat to stay healthy and enjoy the many opportunities they have to take exercise. Attendance is above average and this reflects how much pupils enjoy coming to the school. Pupils feel free from bullying. These, and other related matters, are discussed in lessons and assemblies and lead to pupils saying that they feel confident that any incidents would be quickly and effectively dealt with. The behaviour of pupils both in and out of class is good and school rules are seen as being fair. Pupils are actively encouraged to take on responsibilities, with Year 6 pupils trained each year as 'playground buddies'. Year 6 pupils also lead younger children in class physical activity. There is active involvement with the local community, in particular with the parish church, for example at weekly church services attended by pupils, staff and parents. Pupils raise funds for national and local charities. The

school council is very clear in its purpose of making their voice heard and listening to everyone's ideas. They are rightly proud of the changes they have initiated, introducing the fruit scheme for older pupils, for example, and the fitness trail on the playground. Pupils are effectively prepared for the future, with Year 6 pupils, for example, saying that they felt the smooth transition to secondary school is already being undertaken.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Some lessons are good. Teachers plan a range of activities to interest, motivate and involve pupils but these are not always sufficiently well matched to or challenging enough for pupils of all abilities. In the best lessons pace, challenge and high quality relationships ensure children work hard and make good progress. Children are actively involved, lively and enthusiastic, striving to do their very best.

In satisfactory lessons a number of weaknesses were observed. For example, an overlong whole class session led by the teacher dictated the pace of learning, which was slow for some, and did not involve all pupils sufficiently. Where pupils worked in groups they were sometimes left too long without adequate supervision and some did not attend conscientiously to their work, especially when it did not arouse their interest. On one occasion, when pupils were inattentive, weak class management led to wasted time as the teacher sought to regain the pupils' attention. Work often does not challenge pupils enough to promote rapid progress. There were more weaknesses in teaching in lower Key Stage 2 than elsewhere.

A recent focus of the school has been assessment for learning, and pupils are now becoming more involved in assessing their own and others' learning and work. Regular formal assessments are carried out and pupils' progress is carefully tracked. This information is not yet used effectively across the school to provide appropriately challenging work for all pupils in all lessons. While some marking of pupils' work is effective, in other cases it is not sufficiently focused on how pupils can improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum is placed within a Christian context. There is an appropriate breadth. Good use is made of the school's many links with the church, local community and other agencies to develop opportunities to enhance pupils' experiences. Pupils are taught how to be healthy and stay safe through cross-curricular teaching and learning in several subject areas. Themed weeks, such as science week, are a regular feature. Creative activities are encouraged, including a band involving all Year 5 pupils and their teacher in learning an instrument. Much enjoyment was evident during a session of the band. Curriculum developments have contributed to improving standards in writing across the curriculum, as well as pupils having opportunities for creative first hand experiences that stimulate them to write, such as role play, drama, and visits. Effective links with the local high school have been used to develop French throughout school, to provide specialist mathematics lessons for older able pupils and to provide engineering project lessons to Year 6. There are many opportunities for extra-curricular activities, including a good range of sports which help pupils to lead healthy lifestyles. An annual Year 5 and 6 visit to a European country supports cultural development. Overall, the curriculum provides a good basis for pupils' personal and academic development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Safeguarding systems meet national guidelines and risk assessments are in place. The welfare, pastoral and emotional support for pupils is good and pupils say they feel very well cared for. Teachers are friendly and encouraging. The school has effective strategies to deal with any bullying that may occur and pupils report that bullying is very rare. The school works well with parents and carers to fully involve them in their child's education, for example, through regular curriculum evenings. Teaching assistants help to support pupils with particular needs. There are also good links with external agencies to further develop aspects of pupils' wellbeing. There is a satisfactory system in place for tracking pupils' progress, but this is not used effectively enough to ensure that pupils make consistent rates of progress as they move through the school. Recent strategies to promote attendance have been successful, resulting in a significant improvement between 2005/06 and 2006/07.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has set a clear vision for the school, placing its work within a Christian ethos. She has initiated a number of improvements since the last inspection. Recent actions to improve standards of literacy have been successful. The deputy headteacher has undertaken further training and her role has been developed to include additional responsibilities. Approaches to the practice and recording of assessment, including assessment for learning, have been developed across the curriculum, as well as core subjects. The range and quality of resources for the Foundation Stage have improved, including outdoor play facilities.

However, there has been insufficient management attention to strategies to raise standards for boys, and in mathematics. Inconsistencies in rates of progress in different year groups, for boys and girls, and in different subjects across the school have not yet been tackled effectively. Recent staffing difficulties are hindering the school's ability to promote rapid improvement. Thorough monitoring by the headteacher and other leaders means that the school has a clear view of the quality of teaching and learning as it is at present. Although the school self-evaluation demonstrates an understanding of aspects which need to be improved, some judgements are overgenerous. The school development plan is comprehensive, but not always sufficiently focused or explicit about immediate priorities for improvement. The headteacher is shouldering many responsibilities in the short term. This limits capacity to improve at the present time, although there are plans to resolve this with increased delegation of responsibilities.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors are well informed about the work of the school. They are supportive of the school and make sure that statutory requirements are met.

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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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	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	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	3
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?	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	3
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	3
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?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

14 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Kirkham St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Lancashire, PR4 2SL

Thank you for making Mr Smith and me feel welcome when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you, and seeing you in lessons, assembly, Church, at lunchtime and playing in the band. You told us that you enjoy school. We were impressed by the work of the school council. The school looks after you well and you told us there is almost no bullying. Your attendance is very good and you behave well.

We found your school to be a satisfactory school. In lessons your teachers look for ways to make your learning interesting. Occasionally, a few of you do not pay as much attention as you should. Your headteacher works hard with the teachers to make improvements to the school and English results have improved. Most of you achieve the results you are capable of by the time you leave school, but girls do better than boys.

The school offers you a good range of activities, including sports which help you to lead healthy lifestyles. Older pupils have good opportunities to take on responsibilities, such as playground buddies.

We judge that some things could be even better at your school. We have asked your headteacher to look at ways to make more of your lessons interesting and challenging, so that all of you learn as much as possible, especially the boys who are not doing as well as the girls at the moment. We have also asked her to look at ways to help you do even better in mathematics.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ruth James HMI