

Blackpool St Nicholas Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119594
Local Authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	313350
Inspection date	23 April 2008
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	237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Graham Piper
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Mellor
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2005
School address	School Road Marton Moss Blackpool Lancashire FY4 5DS
Telephone number	01253 608900
Fax number	01253 608901

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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 aspects of its work: standards in English, the quality of assessment information, the effectiveness of the Foundation Stage and of the school's leadership. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, nationally published pupil performance data, lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work books and additional documentation provided by the school, and discussions with the headteacher, chair of governors and pupils. 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 and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is of an average size for primary schools nationally. It serves an area of mostly private housing situated just outside the town centre of Blackpool. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. A below average number of pupils receive free school meals. The school has a high proportion of Gypsy/Roma children. A major building project was underway at the time of the inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This school provides a good education for its pupils and some aspects of its work are of an outstanding quality. The school's overall self-assessment is accurate. The improvements being made to the school building bear true testimony that all those involved in the leadership of the school want nothing but the best for the pupils. Pupils are a delight to meet. The level of personal care the school provides and pupils' personal development and well-being are excellent. The strong church school values are apparent in all aspects of school life. The school places a high priority on ensuring pupils' emotional well-being, so that they are happy in school and enjoy living and learning together. The very good leadership qualities of the headteacher and the good, well focused teaching are key reasons for the school's success. The overwhelming majority of parents hold the school in very high regard and comment positively on progress, management and communication. One parent's statement sums up their views well: 'I am very happy with my child's progress at St Nicholas and feel all aspects of the school are led well.'

Since the previous inspection standards have risen annually. From a starting point below that typical for their age, pupils of all abilities and backgrounds make good progress and achieve well. Overall results in the most recent national tests at the end of Year 6 were in line with the national average in English and above average in mathematics and science. Children's work and the school's assessment information show that improvement is being sustained. The school's work on writing has been effective in raising standards throughout the school. For example, pupils in Year 6 used their writing skills very well in project work about the Second World War.

Pupils are extremely polite, well mannered and get on well together. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, aided by productive links with the local church. They demonstrate a very good degree of mutual support and understanding. For example, one pupil commented, 'If anyone in my class is stuck I will do my best to help him.' A playground pal system encourages older pupils to look after the younger ones. In a computer club, older pupils enjoy the opportunity to teach and support other pupils, helping them to improve their skills. Pupils feel safe and free from harassment in school. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy, both within and outside the school. In addition to the school and eco council, pupils take on a full range of roles in the school such as acting as monitors and safety officers. Worthwhile suggestions about how to improve provision within the school are taken seriously by staff. As a result, pupils feel valued and feel empowered to influence key decisions. They take part in forums with other schools to discuss aspects of school life. The school's attendance figures show extremely good rates, and much work is done to support transient pupils who stay for only a short period.

The curriculum is of a good quality. It is enriched and enhanced by a very wide range of additional activities. Good whole-school planning and teamwork ensure that a wide range of teaching strategies is built into the curriculum to suit pupils' different needs. For example, good use is made of visits to places of interest and every opportunity is taken in science lessons for pupils to carry out experiments for themselves. During the inspection a whole school focus on poetry allowed pupils of all attainment levels to improve their knowledge and appreciation of what poetry is

all about. For example, older pupils confidently and accurately were able to point out the similarities in style between the works of different poets.

Teaching and learning are good. Despite the potential distractions of the ongoing building work and three classes having to work in demountable temporary classrooms, teachers manage their classes exceptionally well. Teachers establish very good relationships with pupils and the working atmosphere is relaxed and purposeful. Teaching and support staff have a good understanding of pupils' changing needs and adapt their approaches in class accordingly to maintain the pace of progress. Their questioning skills are good but occasionally not enough time is devoted to ensuring all pupils understand before moving on to the next question. Resources such as interactive whiteboards are used well to accelerate pupils' learning. Not all teachers use marking effectively to ensure that pupils know what they need to do next to improve. The school's pupil tracking system provides a wealth of data on pupils' progress. However, it does not clearly identify pupils that are not progressing as well as they should.

The leadership and management of the school are good. For example, the school's focus on improving pupils' writing skills has ensured that standards have risen. The headteacher provides strong and purposeful leadership and is supported well by the leadership team. The school regularly seeks and acts on the views of parents and pupils, and works extremely effectively with a wide range of partners both within and outside the local community. The school is outward looking and is always willing to take on best practice. Governors are knowledgeable and well informed about the school and provide good support. They have a strategic view of the quality of what the school does and about its future direction. The school has made very good progress since the last inspection. It provides good value for money and has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The provision in Reception is outstanding. Children enter the class with skills that are below those typical for their age. They make good progress in all areas of learning, with the result that by the end of the Foundation Stage most children reach the goals expected of five year olds. First-rate teaching, leadership and management ensure that activities are exceptionally well planned. There is a very effective balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities. Children play and learn happily together. Teaching and learning time is maximised, and assessment and observation of children are used well in order to ensure they make rapid progress. Children are actively involved in influencing the curriculum. For example, they mirror the work done by the on-site builders, proudly wearing their safety helmets as they go about their tasks. Despite the limitations of the building, the Foundation Stage leader plans an excellent series of activities that builds effectively on children's enthusiasm whilst at the same time developing their skills. Systems and procedures indoors and outside are so well established that children very quickly become independent learners.

What the school should do to improve further

- Apply the marking policy consistently so all pupils are clear about how to improve their work further.
- Improve the quality of the school's pupil tracking system.

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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	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	1
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	1
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

24 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blackpool St Nicholas CofE Primary School, Blackpool,
FY4 5DS

What a good school you attend!

Thank you for helping me during the inspection. You will not be surprised to know that I think your school is of a good quality. I enjoyed watching you learn and listening to what you had to say. It was a pleasure to meet pupils who kindly gave up their lunchtime to answer questions. I was really pleased to see how sensible you all are with all the building work going on. It was an absolute delight to see the children in the Reception class enjoying all the exciting activities they were involved in. The list below shows some of the many things I liked about your school.

- You feel safe, work hard and achieve well throughout the school.
- You behave exceptionally well, are keen to offer your opinions and also to listen to the views of others.
- You like your teachers and other members of staff, and the way they make learning interesting.

I have asked your school to look at two things to make your work even better.

- To add written comments, when appropriate, in the marking of your work to show you what you need to do to improve
- To make sure that all the information the school has about how well you are doing is used to help you continue to make good progress.

Yours sincerely

Geoffrey Yates

Lead inspector