

St John the Baptist Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131683
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	315850
Inspection dates	10–11 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Kathleen McArthur

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	268
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Hartley
Headteacher	Mr Kieran Heakin
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Thames Avenue Burnley Lancashire BB10 2PZ
Telephone number	01282 438120
Fax number	01282 450049

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized school opened in 2006 following the amalgamation of the former separate infant and junior schools. At the time of the inspection, pupils were still accommodated in the original buildings on two sites, one mile apart. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage, and very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. A lower than average number of pupils receive free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average. The school has many awards, including Healthy Schools, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Investors in People, the Active Mark and the Eco-Schools Green Flag Award.

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 that gives good value for money. Pupils' personal development is outstanding and they flourish in the school's warm, Christian ethos. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive. Many made very positive comments about their child's progress, happiness and the high quality of care. One wrote, 'My children love coming to school, and I can't get them home at night'.

A real enthusiasm for learning by pupils of all ages is a major strength of the school. Pupils clearly enjoy their lessons, work hard and make good progress due to effective teaching based on a stimulating curriculum. Achievement is good. From low starting points pupils get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage to reach levels expected for their age at the end of Reception. Standards in the 2007 national tests were below average in Years 2 and 6. Inspection evidence shows that the action the school has taken to improve progress and standards has been effective. As a result, pupils are making good progress and standards are much higher at both key stages, although more able pupils do not always achieve as well as they could.

Pupils proudly stated, 'It's a healthy school' and this is reflected in their excellent understanding of how to look after their health. Behaviour is exceptional and pupils say they feel very safe and secure and know they can report any concerns through the 'bully box'. They have a strong sense of right and wrong, demonstrate genuine concern for the needs of others, and care for the environment through the 'Eco-Warriors'. Pupils eagerly undertake responsibilities in school and are keen to help the parish and communities further afield. Consequently, they mature into thoughtful, reliable young people with a zest for life, well equipped for the future.

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Enthusiastic teachers provide activities that really capture pupils' attention and promote their good attitudes to learning. Staff use agreed formats to plan lessons and track how their pupils are progressing. However, too often pupils of different abilities are given the same work so the more able pupils are not always challenged enough to reach higher levels. Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. Pastoral care is outstanding. Good systems monitor pupils' progress closely and are used to set targets for their learning. These systems are not yet used consistently and pupils are not always involved in assessing their own learning or aware of how to improve their work. Many interesting and varied activities, such as theme weeks, theatre and residential visits enrich the curriculum most effectively and add substantially to pupil's enjoyment and achievement.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, senior leaders and highly dedicated governors provide good leadership. This ensures the amalgamation of the two schools is not hindering teaching and learning. Their firm commitment to providing good quality teaching and learning based on an accurate evaluation of all aspects of the school's work is already evident in the accelerated pace of pupils' progress and in their outstanding levels of personal development. The school has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most children start school with levels of skills below those typical for their age. Children are very well cared for so they feel secure, quickly settle into the class routines and clearly enjoy coming to school. They become increasingly confident and independent and make good progress in all the areas of learning. As a result, their attainment on entry to Year 1 is in line with national

expectations. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The importance given to early basic skills is clearly evident in all learning activities that cover all aspects of the Foundation Stage curriculum well. Children are keen to read and progress swiftly in recognising the words they meet most frequently. Good use is made of support staff, but there is not always sufficient balance between child initiated and teacher led activities. Staff effectively minimise the effect on pupils of the many limitations of an aging building. They ensure that children receive a good breadth of activities despite, for example, the lack of a readily accessible outside area. The overall quality of the children's experiences provides a good foundation for their future learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards overall by ensuring that the more able pupils are consistently challenged in lessons.
- Ensure that assessment systems are used consistently and that pupils are involved in assessing their own learning and receive clearer guidance about how to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. Most start school with attainment below that which is typical for their age. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage so that their attainment on entry when they start in Year 1 meets national expectations.

As this is a new school, published results are only available for 2007. Most pupils in Year 2 reached the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics. However, few reached the higher levels, particularly in reading and writing. As a result, standards overall were below average. This was also the case at Key Stage 2. Most pupils reached the nationally expected Level 4 in English, mathematics and science, but not enough reached the higher levels, particularly in mathematics. Consequently, standards overall and in mathematics were marginally below average. Much to its credit, the school has acted swiftly to tackle this and work seen in lessons, in pupils' books and tracking information shows that pupils are now making good progress and standards are rising. As a result, the school is confident that standards in national tests in Years 2 and 6 will be better this year: they are expected to be broadly average. Pupils with learning difficulties and or/disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English are provided with skilled support so they progress well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Behaviour is excellent and everyone gets on well together. Above average attendance figures demonstrate how much pupils like school. Pupils are welcoming to visitors and very polite. They know why physical exercise is important and enjoy initiatives such as the weekly walking bus. The school's 'Eco warriors' take their responsibilities very seriously and have an excellent understanding of environmental issues. Pupils have a very good understanding of the need to help those less fortunate. Very good links have been established with schools that have a broader cultural diversity and there are particularly effective links with a school in Ghana. These links contribute to the pupils' very good knowledge and appreciation of different cultures and customs. Pupils say they feel very safe and secure because they know that adults will help them if they have a problem. The school council makes an effective contribution to the life of the school by giving all pupils a voice in the running of the school

in both buildings. The emphasis placed on developing pupils' basic skills, including the use of information and communication technology (ICT), and the involvement in the local community ensures pupils are prepared well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Good relationships make a big contribution to pupils' learning and teachers provide activities that really capture pupils' attention. Consequently, pupils enjoy their lessons, show good attitudes to their work, become keen learners and make good progress. Lessons are generally well planned using all available resources. Pupils respond particularly well when staff make learning more exciting using ICT. Most lessons move along at a good pace so pupils concentrate hard and listen carefully. Teaching assistants provide skilled support; particularly to groups targeted to receive extra help and these pupils also make good progress. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and helpful written comments tell them how to correct mistakes. However, too few comments tell pupils how to improve their work or challenge them to reach the next level. Information from progress tracking and monitoring is increasingly being used to plan the next steps in learning and direct help where needed. This is not yet consistent in all lessons and sometimes the same work is given to pupils of all abilities. Consequently, more able pupils are not always extended enough and challenged to reach higher standards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets all statutory requirements. Literacy, numeracy and ICT have priority and support pupils' work in other areas; for example block graphs illustrating science results. However, opportunities to extend writing skills in other subjects are somewhat limited. Careful adaptations to the curriculum successfully meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. An excellent personal and social programme contributes to the outstanding levels of pupils' personal development. Many activities enrich the curriculum and add to pupils' enjoyment, aptly illustrated by one pupil who said, 'we do fun things'. French lessons and educational visits, for example to Townley Hall, are popular and really enhance pupils' cultural development, along with global and local school connections. The school offers specialist music and sports provision and after-school clubs which are very well attended.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This aspect of the school's work is good, but the provision of pastoral care is outstanding. The strong Christian ethos that permeates all aspects of school life has a very positive effect on pupils' attitudes, behaviour and self-esteem so they all feel equally valued. Children settle quickly, regardless of when they join the school, because of the caring and friendly welcome they receive. Very close liaison with external services ensures the care and support provided to vulnerable children and their families, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is of the highest order. Very good arrangements ensure all children feel safe, both on and off the school site. The school meets current requirements for safeguarding pupils. Well established

child protection procedures are understood by all staff who benefit from regular training. Good systems track and monitor academic progress and provide information to set targets for individuals and groups. However, the use of this information is not always consistent and pupils are not yet fully involved in the assessment of their own learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management by the headteacher and the skilled senior leadership team are successfully guiding the school through the difficult amalgamation of the split site infant and junior departments. The school has evaluated its position accurately and correctly prioritised areas for improvement. A formidable team approach has rigorously embraced the challenge to raise standards and improve achievement. There is a clear commitment on placing care for the needs of all pupils, regardless of their age, background or abilities, at the very heart of the life of the school. As a result, pupils' personal development is excellent and equality of opportunity is good. However, academically, not enough pupils are yet reaching the higher levels in English, mathematics and science. Subject leaders have a good understanding of their areas and are becoming more consistent in, for example, assessing rates of progress for separate groups. Progress towards improvement is keenly evaluated and challenged by an experienced and highly involved governing body. As a result the school is emerging as a strong feature in the community, which is particularly appreciated by very supportive parents. The school's successful start bodes well for its continuing success and improvement in the future. It provides 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	NA
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	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	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	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

14 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John the Baptist Roman Catholic Primary School, Lancashire, BB10 9PZ

My inspection team really enjoyed visiting your school last week. Everyone we met was friendly, polite and helpful and this really helped us complete our work. You are obviously proud of your school and enjoy everything you do. Your parents told us they are very pleased with the school and the progress you are making. We were really impressed by your excellent behaviour even when it was so wet and windy and you couldn't go outside! We want to tell you what we found.

St John the Baptist is a good school. Your teachers work very hard and plan interesting activities, including trips, sports coaching and theme weeks so you are keen to learn. You make good progress and although the results of tests last year indicate that standards are below average, they are much higher this year. However, we do think more of you could reach higher standards, especially those who can work more quickly. The staff does a good job by keeping a regular check on how well you are doing but we have asked that you are given work to really challenge you; we know you will show them that you can do it! They are also going to show you how to check how well you are doing so you know exactly what you have to do to improve your work.

We think your personal development is outstanding. You told us you feel very safe in school and your attendance is good. The staff take really good care of you and you are considerate and responsible towards others. The school councillors and the Eco Warriors all do a very good job to help you and the school.

The headteacher, staff and governors lead the school well and are working hard to make the school even better for you all. We know you will help them all you can by continuing to work hard and by acting upon advice on how to reach higher standards.

I send you our very best wishes,

Kathleen McArthur

Lead inspector