

Cuerden Church School, Bamber Bridge

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133645
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	316178
Inspection dates	18–19 October 2007
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	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Graham Halsall
Headteacher	Mrs Denise Sanderson
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2003
School address	Station Road Bamber Bridge Preston Lancashire PR5 6ED
Telephone number	01772 335033
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Cuerden Church School is smaller than most primary schools nationally and is situated in an urban area. Pupils are taught in single age group classes. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Pupils are predominantly from White British families. The school has an average number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It has achieved many awards including the bronze Eco award and the Healthy Schools award.

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 which has successfully steered its way through a period of unavoidable disruption involving the amalgamation of two schools, a high turnover of staff and a move into a new building. It is now well placed to move on further, and focus on raising standards at the higher levels in writing. The school's self-evaluation is accurate. Pupils' personal development and the care the school provides are both of a good quality. The school's strong Christian values ensure that pupils feel valued and they say they feel very safe and get all the help that they need. Parents are highly supportive of the school and it is held in high regard within the community. One parent commented, 'The school has many good attributes.'

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Most children start in the Reception class with skills and knowledge that are typical for their age. The majority move into Year 1 having reached the levels expected in all the areas of learning. By the end of Year 2, the most recent unvalidated assessment results show standards have remained broadly average, although there is a slight falling trend, most marked in writing. In Key Stage 2, progress is satisfactory and standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science, but standards in writing are below average. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory across the school. Classrooms are managed well and a good feature in all classes is the high quality of relationships between staff and pupils. Support provided by skilled teaching assistants ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. Whilst teachers know pupils well, whole school formal assessment procedures have only recently been established. The staff has just begun to use the information gathered about pupils' progress to support pupils' learning more effectively.

Pupils enjoy their lessons, try hard and behave well both in class and outdoors. Pupils talk with authority about the importance of eating sensibly and are very aware of how to maintain their own safety and protect that of others. The school is a secure and safe place and all adults are appropriately checked. Whilst the curriculum is satisfactory with good use made of topic weeks, few challenging opportunities are provided for pupils to write in a variety of situations. This reduces pupils' achievement in this aspect of their work. The written work they do is not always presented well. Good links with the local churches and the use of educational visits, for example to Cuerden Park, extend pupils' experiences effectively.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has led the school successfully through five years of considerable change. With the support of the governors, the newly appointed deputy, and her staff she is firmly focused on raising standards further. The school provides satisfactory value for money and has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Purposeful leadership by the new Reception teacher ensures children's achievement is satisfactory, both personally and academically. Most children make satisfactory progress to reach the required level by the time the year is over. The national focus on Every Child Matters is uppermost in everyone's mind, and the environment is warm, caring and supportive. Teaching is satisfactory. The classroom is colourful, and well-resourced, and provides a wide range of activities. However, not enough use is made of the outside area to support children's learning. Children quickly become engrossed in school life but, at times, opportunities for them to

experience things first hand are restricted. The children are happy. 'They won't stay off school even when they're ill', was a comment echoed by a number of parents.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure consistency across the school in the use of assessment information about pupils' progress to enable all pupils to achieve well.
- Ensure the curriculum gives pupils opportunities to raise standards both in the quality and in the presentation of their writing.

A small proportion of the 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

Standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science by the time pupils leave Year 6. This reflects satisfactory achievement, but good achievement in science in 2007. However, standards in writing are below average. The achievement of pupils in writing has been identified by the school as a weakness and is now the major focus for school improvement. Standards have fallen slightly for Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics, but have remained broadly average. Disruptions in staffing have been a key factor in the decline in standards and disruptions caused by moving from the old school to the new one. The 2006 Year 6 results showed standards to be average in mathematics and science but below average in English. The school's statistics show average results for the current Year 6 in mathematics and science with more pupils achieving the expected level in English, although a minority are still below average in writing. Most children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress towards their targets and, by Year 1, most reach the levels expected of them. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from effective support which ensures satisfactory achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils work hard, cooperate well with each other, and are enthusiastic. They enjoy having visitors and approach adults confidently to talk about how proud they are of their school. Behaviour in lessons and around school is good with children showing respect and consideration for others. Pupils willingly accept responsibility such as acting as playground mentors. School council members represent their classmates conscientiously. For example, they are currently debating how to increase the range of visits and visitors to school. The school has worked hard to improve attendance which is now in line with that found in most schools. Spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good overall. However, pupils' awareness of cultures different from their own is satisfactory. The school celebrates pupils' achievements in lessons and assemblies. Reflecting the school's Christian values, spiritual development is a strength. Pupils have a good understanding about the importance of being safe and of having a healthy lifestyle. They make a good contribution to life outside school by their involvement in environmental issues. The broadly average skills pupils gain in English, mathematics and science prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Good relationships that help pupils become keen learners lie at the heart of teaching. Throughout the school, teachers and support staff are successful in managing pupils' behaviour. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive effective support and hence make satisfactory progress. The school's assessment procedures are not yet used consistently enough to help pupils make better progress, especially in writing. Pupils have good opportunities to discuss their work with each other and this contributes well to their speaking and listening skills. However, teachers do not always use questioning effectively enough in the opening part of lessons to ensure that all pupils understand what they have to do. Teachers' marking makes pupils increasingly aware of their own attainment and explains how they can improve their work but insufficient emphasis is placed on ensuring that work is presented well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum contributes well to pupils' personal development but less so to academic progress. The school is exploring the promotion of enjoyment through learning by, for example, linking subjects together. Pupils were observed developing their skills in art, technology, literacy, mathematics and science during a 'History Theme' week. However, in other lessons opportunities for pupils to improve their writing skills are missed when work is left unfinished or when capable writers are not challenged by the tasks set. The curriculum is enriched through a good range of after-school activities. Children also enjoy a variety of trips and visitors. These successfully foster an interest in learning and contribute immensely to pupils' enjoyment. Pupils are given clear information about how to keep safe, to be healthy and to accept responsibility. This is helping them to become young citizens, enabling them to cope with changes and dangers in their lives.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This aspect is good. The school has successfully brought together pupils from two schools and ensured that they receive good pastoral support. Pupils say they feel very safe and secure in school and know there is always an adult to turn to with any worries. Good procedures for raising attendance have led to attendance rates improving. They are now in line with the national average. Pupils' academic progress is tracked regularly, enabling teachers to identify where extra support or challenge is needed. A very caring pastoral team ensures the needs of any vulnerable pupils are sensitively met. Pupils say they feel well supported in lessons by adults who reward successes and boost self-esteem. Child protection and all other risk assessments are in place. Pupils with specific learning needs are supported well in their personal development by highly skilled staff and outside agencies. Pupils make a happy transition to and from school because of good liaison with outside agencies and parents.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management, including governance, are satisfactory. Despite unavoidable disruption, the headteacher has ensured the school has a very caring and nurturing ethos based on Christian values. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and their personal development is of a good quality. Good links exist with parents and the local community and the school's newsletter is highly informative. The school is now firmly focused on driving forward pupils' academic performance. Having initiated a progress tracking system, the new senior leadership team recognises that assessment data need to be used more effectively to raise standards, especially in writing. Subject leaders are becoming more involved in evaluating their subjects but some are new in post and will need more time to become fully effective. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well and its judgements on the school self-evaluation form are accurate because its procedures for self-evaluation are robust. Since the last inspection, despite many staff changes and the move into a new building, there has been satisfactory improvement. Given the quality of the new school leadership team the school has a good capacity to continue to improve in future.

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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	2

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	3
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	3

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?	3
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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
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	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

23 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cuerden Church School, Bamber Bridge, Lancashire, PR5 6ED

Thank you for the very friendly welcome you all gave me when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed my time with you and seeing you in lessons. The costumes some of you wore as part of your 'Dr. Who goes back in time week,' were magnificent. I promised the school council that I would let you know what I thought. I am pleased to tell you that I agree with your school that you have a satisfactory standard of education.

I agree with you that all the adults working in your school make lessons interesting and that if you need help you get it. You work hard in lessons and behave well. There is one very special thing I would like you all to do and that is to work extra hard so that you do even better when you are asked to write. The staff are going to make sure that the information they have about your progress is used to make sure that you are always challenged to do your best. You can all help yourselves by writing neatly and by taking notice of any comments that are written in your books to help you to improve.

Your behaviour is good and I was very impressed with how polite you were. You told me that you feel safe in school and that if a problem occurs an adult will sort it out quickly when you tell them about it. The school council is busy on your behalf and members enjoy being able to take new things forward to make life better for you.

Keep on working hard so you can continue to play a big part in ensuring that your school continues to improve.

Yours sincerely

Geoffrey Yates

Lead inspector