

Farnworth Church of England Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111394
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	325370
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Mr Paul Bamber

The inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	383
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S Smither
Headteacher	Mrs J Horsley
Date of previous school inspection	March 2006
School address	Pit Lane Widnes WA8 9HS
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and held meetings with the acting headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher, other members of the school's management team, a group of parents, pupils, the chair of governors and a representative of the local authority. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation including: the school improvement plan, records of pupils' progress, teachers' planning and assessments, individual education plans for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and 101 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether the progress that pupils are making in Key Stage 2 continues to be significantly below average and whether standards in this key stage are still declining
- how effective teaching is, particularly for pupils in Key Stage 2, and in writing throughout the school
- how effectively the curriculum is meeting all pupils' needs
- how effective leaders and managers are in addressing weaknesses in pupils' performance in Key Stage 2.

Information about the school

The pupils who attend this much larger than average-sized primary school come from a wide range of backgrounds. The vast majority are White British. The percentage with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is smaller than the national average, as is that of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. A very small proportion is entitled to free school meals. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision comprises two Reception classes. The school has the Healthy School Award and the Activemark. Since March 2009 the school has been led by an acting headteacher.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

4

Capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Pupils' overall achievement in Key Stage 2 is inadequate, especially in mathematics and writing. Standards in Year 6 have been in decline over the last five years from significantly high to only broadly average now. Despite the fact that in 2008 standards in Key Stage 2 were above average overall, there is compelling evidence from the school's data and from the inspection that standards are currently average. The reasons for these weaknesses are:

- teaching is not consistently strong enough to ensure that pupils make the progress they should, given their individual starting points
- the curriculum does not meet all pupils' needs and does not make learning relevant and exciting
- leaders and managers have failed to take the necessary action to avert the decline in pupils' progress and in their attainment.

Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, settling in quickly and making good progress. This good progress continues in Key Stage 1, although it is less good in writing, especially for the more able. Throughout the school pupils behave well and, when motivated, work conscientiously and with pride in their work. However, in Key Stage 2, pupils lack the confidence to take the initiative because they are given too few opportunities to learn independently or to be fully involved in assessing how well they are getting on. Too often pupils learn passively, the pace of lessons is too slow and work is insufficiently challenging.

The curriculum often fails to motivate pupils' interest. It is too formal and lacks vitality and relevance. There is inadequate planning in the long and medium term to ensure that pupils progress effectively in their knowledge and understanding and in acquiring and applying basic key skills.

Although pupils are cared for and supported well, the school is not currently meeting all the necessary safeguarding requirements with regard to child protection. This means that the overall quality of care, support and guidance is only satisfactory.

Leaders and managers and the governing body are only just coming to terms with the significant weaknesses that exist. Their self-evaluation is over-optimistic and although they have identified that between 40% and 50% of pupils in Years 3, 5 and 6 are underachieving, they have not demonstrated the capacity to make the necessary improvements. Leaders and managers are ill-equipped to effect changes that will bring about improvement. This is because they lack the training that would enable them to carry out their management roles effectively and have not been held to account for their responsibilities or pupils' performance. Until very recently, governors have been unaware of the decline in pupils' attainment and progress or of their statutory duties and responsibilities. This has meant that the governing body has been ineffective in meeting the requirements with regard to safeguarding, community cohesion and equalities and in holding the school to account for its performance. Since the previous inspection, developments in two of the three areas for improvement in relation to the use of assessment data and the development of the role of subject leaders have been inadequate. The impact of the many weaknesses in provision and in leadership and management is that too many pupils are not getting the education to which they are entitled.

What does the school need to do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils in Key Stage 2 make much better progress and attain higher standards, especially in mathematics and writing by:
 - involving them much more in their own learning and assessment
 - using the information gained from tracking their progress far more effectively to provide pupils with work which is responsive to their needs and provides a suitable level of challenge.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 2 by:
 - providing pupils with consistently challenging work
 - increasing the pace of lessons and setting much higher expectations for the amount and quality of work to be completed in lessons.
- Improve the quality of the curriculum by:
 - producing a whole-school curricular plan that identifies how pupils will progressively acquire and apply key skills across different subjects
 - ensuring that planning fully matches pupils' needs
 - making it much more relevant and exciting for pupils.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - making leaders and managers at all levels more accountable and responsible for the progress made by pupils and the standards they achieve
 - including all staff more in school development planning, the analysis of assessment data and in checking on the effectiveness of provision
 - ensuring that statutory requirements with regard to safeguarding and community cohesion are fully met
 - enabling governors to acquire the necessary information and skills that will allow them to support and challenge the school's performance effectively.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

The quality of pupils' learning is inadequate overall. Too often pupils are insufficiently challenged, typically commenting 'the work is too easy'. This is more evident in Key Stage 2, but some pupils in Key Stage 1 find writing tasks rather tedious. Teachers' assessments reveal that no pupil in Year 2 is currently achieving the higher Level 3 in writing. Nevertheless, attainment in Key Stage 1 is above average overall and pupils achieve above average standards in reading and mathematics. In Key Stage 2, a scrutiny of pupils' work endorsed the information the school has compiled about their standards and progress. This shows that, in most year groups, attainment is broadly average. However, given their starting points around half the pupils are underachieving, particularly in mathematics and writing. The most recent Year 6 teachers' assessments indicate that the decline in attainment over the past three years in particular has continued in all subjects. Too often the work that pupils are set is mundane, fails to excite them and does not require them to think deeply. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning or to understand the progress they are making. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make inadequate progress in Key Stage 2. Pupils are supported in their learning by conscientious teaching assistants, but the work they are set suffers from the same shortcomings as that of their classmates.

Pupils are articulate and, when motivated, they are enthusiastic learners. They are well aware of the benefits of eating sensibly and of taking regular exercise. Pupils know the risks connected with the misuse of drugs and alcohol. They take responsibility willingly when given the chance to do so but in lessons these opportunities are limited. Despite having a keen sense of fair play and effective social skills, pupils' awareness and understanding of cultures other than their own, both in this country and further afield, are limited. Attendance is above average and punctuality is good. However, pupils' other workplace skills are less effective because they have too few opportunities to work in teams, to solve problems or to initiate and follow up investigations. Overall, pupils' behaviour is good and they establish positive relationships with each other and adults. Sometimes, when teaching fails to motivate or interest them, pupils lose concentration and do not listen well.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	4
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	4
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	3
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	3

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	3
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How effective is the provision?

The key reasons for pupils' underachievement in Key Stage 2 are inadequate teaching over time and an unsatisfactory curriculum. During the inspection some satisfactory and sometimes good teaching was observed. This very recent improvement is linked to a governors' action plan put in place following a comprehensive review by the local authority. This review was carried out in May 2009, triggered by concerns about the school's declining standards and evident underachievement. The findings of this review, endorsed by inspection evidence, indicate that weaknesses in teaching over time have contributed significantly to pupils' underachievement. Chief amongst these are too heavy a reliance on worksheets and other published materials, too much passive learning and lessons that are conducted at too slow a pace. Teaching is over-directive and fails to use assessment information to set challenging and relevant targets so expectations of what pupils are capable of doing are too low. There is effective teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1, but the school is failing to build on this good start made by pupils. Good teaching in Year 4 also means that pupils in this year group make better progress than others in Key Stage 2.

The curriculum takes insufficient account of pupils' experiences and backgrounds, and lacks excitement. This means that often pupils do not see the point of what they learn or get much enjoyment from their work. There are exceptions and this was evident in one lesson in which pupils composed comic rhyming couplets in the style of Ogden Nash, and in another lesson when, through investigation, pupils calculated the number of blades of grass in the school field. Too often, however, the curriculum neither promotes pupils' independence sufficiently nor enables them to apply their basic key skills across a range of subjects. There are visits out of school, although pupils say they would like more, and these sometimes initiate effective work. For example, Year 2 pupils wrote an appreciative letter about their recent visit to Chester Zoo. Visitors come into school and they add interest to pupils' learning. However, there is no evidence that their impact has contributed to higher standards or improved achievement. Pupils are confident that if they have concerns or are troubled there is someone they can turn to and be reassured. The systems to ensure good attendance and sensible behaviour work well. Pastoral care is sensitive and parents report positively about this aspect of the school's work.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

There are significant weaknesses in leadership and in management that are linked to the inadequacies in pupils' achievements and in aspects of provision. There has been too little delegated leadership and management and, as a result, leaders and managers lack the necessary skills and are underused. Few are sufficiently aware of their responsibilities to promote higher standards and better achievement, or of how to use the information available about pupils' attainment and progress to effect improvement. Middle and senior leaders lack training and are not required to compile plans to help improve provision in their areas of responsibility. Few feel they have ownership of the school's development and until quite recently morale amongst the staff has been low. Following the local authority review, there is now a more positive determination to improve matters, but this aspiration and the very recent improvements to provision in no way provide evidence of even a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement. Leaders and managers promote good behaviour and positive attitudes amongst pupils and the links with the church contribute well to pupils' effective spiritual development. There is good leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, overall there is little evidence that a determined drive for improvement exists or is communicated effectively through the school or to parents. The school has detailed information about pupils' academic progress, but does not use this in order to bring about the necessary improvements in the attainment and progress of many Key Stage 2 pupils. It is clearly not providing equality of opportunity for these pupils to achieve as well as they can, especially in mathematics and writing. The school has links with other educational institutions and these have proved beneficial, for example in facilitating a smooth transition into Reception and on to secondary school. However, the contribution to pupils' learning and importantly to their improvement is minimal. The school's promotion of community cohesion is unsatisfactory because it has not given enough consideration to wider and global contexts, has no policy and has not reviewed its provision. Governors have not fulfilled their responsibilities in ensuring these and other requirements have been met and in holding the school to account.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, including effective leadership, enables children to make a good start to their education and to become happy and receptive learners. Children's skills are at the expected levels for their age when they enter the Reception class. They achieve well in all the areas of early learning,

progressing particularly well in their personal, social and emotional development. By the end of the Reception Year, their attainment is above expectations and children have gained significantly in confidence and enthusiasm for learning. Sessions focusing on letters and sounds are helping to boost early reading and writing skills and this has started to impact positively on children's achievement in literacy. The quality of teaching is good and stimulates learning well. The curriculum provides activities that are well matched to children's needs, and which they find fun and interesting. Staff plan the use of the outdoor area well. However, the area is too small, with limited capacity for providing investigative and adventurous outdoor learning through play. Children interact well with each other and enjoy warm relationships with the caring staff. Provision for ensuring children's welfare is good. Parents appreciate the good communications between home and school and the sensitive care provided for their children. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader and an effective team work together very well to promote the children's progress and well-being. Vulnerable children and those with additional learning needs are supported well. Children's progress is observed carefully and assessment is systematic so that additional support is given promptly to those who need it. Good links with external agencies promote children's health, welfare and progress well.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents are positive about the way their children are educated and nurtured at the school. Their view is that the way their children are cared for is the strongest aspect of the school's work. The vast majority feel that their child enjoys school all or most of the time and that a healthy lifestyle is very well promoted. A small minority have concerns about the lack of information they receive about their child's progress, how well the school is led and managed and that the school fails to inform them sufficiently about how to support their child's learning. Whilst agreeing with some of the parents' and carers' views, inspectors found other aspects of the school's work are weaker than the parents judge them to be.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Farnworth Church of England Controlled Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children. The inspection team received 101 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 418 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	27	8	0

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.

26 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Farnworth Church of England Controlled Primary School,
Widnes, WA8 9HS

I would like to thank you on behalf of the team for the warm welcome you gave us during our recent visit to inspect your school. You were most polite and spoke well about your views and your work. You will know that the reason for our visit was to decide how good an education you have. I have to tell you that overall it is not good enough. As a result, the school has been put into special measures. This means that over the next year or so it will have lots of help to make it much better and that some other inspectors will visit to see if all of you are doing as well as you should. There are, of course, some good things about the school.

- Children in Reception get off to a flying start and make good progress in their learning.
- This good progress carries on in Key Stage 1.
- You behave well and have positive attitudes and your attendance is good.
- You are sensible about what you eat and know that exercise is good for you.

However, there are some important things that need to be better, so I have asked the headteacher and the teachers to do the following things;

- make sure that pupils in Key Stage 2 do as well as they can, especially in mathematics and writing
- make sure that your teachers always set work that suits you, helps you to think hard and that you find interesting and challenging
- improve the links between the subjects you study so that the work you get is exciting and makes sense to you
- help all staff and governors to be involved in making the school better for everyone.

You can all help by working very hard, behaving well and trying your very best.

Yours sincerely

Paul Bamber
Lead Inspector

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