

Bickerstaffe Voluntary Controlled Church of England School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119381
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	327013
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Shirley Herring

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	71
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Wilcox
Headteacher	Mrs Jeanne Hall
Date of previous school inspection	27 April 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hall Lane Bickerstaffe Ormskirk Lancashire L39 0EH

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This smaller than average primary school, while attracting pupils from an increasingly wide area, it is at the heart of the rural village community. Almost all pupils are from a White British background. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly above average and the number of pupils whose first language is not English is below average. The school makes provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In recent years, there have been high levels of pupils joining the school at times other than the usual.

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 and improving school. Personal development is outstanding. Strong links with the church support pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and join in enthusiastically with the wide range of activities on offer. Pupils have a very good understanding of the importance of diet and vigorous exercise in living a healthy lifestyle. They feel safe because everyone gets on well with each other. They make an excellent contribution to the community, for example contributing an extra 10p for their lunch to support the World Food programme. Sound basic skills and the opportunities to work with each other prepare pupils well for the future. Behaviour is excellent.

Children enter the school with a range of skills that overall are below what is usual for their age. They make good progress during their time in school and standards are broadly average by the time they leave in Year 6. In the 2008 national assessments in Key Stage 1 standards were average overall. Pupils did better in reading than writing. In the 2007 national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 standards were broadly average, with fewer pupils achieving the higher level in science than in English and mathematics. Provisional results for 2008 indicate that standards were again average. Writing is correctly identified as a comparative weakness by the school. Pupils have increasing opportunities to write in different subjects but have difficulty in choosing the appropriate language for different purposes. While all the pupils reached the level expected in science fewer than could be expected achieved the higher level. This is because pupils are not able to use precise scientific language when recording their conclusions.

Teaching is good throughout the school and pupils learn well. Lessons are well planned to involve pupils in evaluating their learning. The good curriculum, with a wide range of additional activities, contributes well to pupils' excellent personal development. This small school has excellent links through the Sports Partnership to extend learning opportunities for the pupils. Care, guidance and support are good. All systems for safeguarding pupils are in place.

Leadership and management are good. The school evaluates its work thoroughly and uses the information well to take the school forward. Improvements in teaching have helped to raise standards in Key Stage 1. There are now good systems for tracking pupils' progress and to give guidance to help pupils to improve. Improvements in provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and in the Early Years Foundation Stage indicate the school has a good capacity to improve in future.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. Children enter the school with a range of skills that overall are below what is usual for their age, particularly their language skills. Excellent teaching, which makes very good use of assessment information to plan for specific needs of each individual, enables them to achieve very well. They make excellent progress in the Reception class. Most reach, and many exceed, the expected goals by the time they enter Year 1.

Personal development is outstanding. Children enjoy school because the day is exciting, whether baking bread or planting seeds. Children know the benefit of healthy food and exercise, and feel safe in the supportive, secure environment where adults are clearly focused on helping

them to learn. They gain in confidence as they learn to talk about their feelings and make a very good contribution to the school community by putting up their hands and taking turns.

Children learn and develop at an excellent rate because the teacher provides an extensive range of first-hand, practical experiences. Letter sounds are taught systematically, with accompanying actions, so children achieve particularly well in reading. The teacher takes every opportunity for children to solve every day problems, to read simple words and to examine the natural world as they play outside. Parents are very involved in their learning for example, helping the children to solve the clues to find the missing 'Gingerbread Man'.

Welfare is outstanding. The excellent procedures for introducing children to school, including close links with the pre-school on site, helps them settle quickly and develop very good attitudes to school from an early age. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed very well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing so that pupils use the most appropriate language when writing for different purposes.
- Increase the proportion of pupils attaining the higher level in science and increase their ability to use precise scientific language more systematically in recording their conclusions.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter the school with a range of skills that overall are below typical for their age. They make good progress during their time in school and attain standards that are broadly average by the time they leave. In the 2008 assessments in Year 2, standards were broadly average overall; pupils did better in reading than in writing.

Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2. An increasing number of pupils join the school during Key Stage 2. The school's good systems for tracking progress show that pupils made the expected or better progress in Key Stage 2 and achieved well. In the 2007 national tests for Year 6 standards were broadly average overall, though fewer pupils attained the higher level in science than in other subjects. Provisional results for 2008 show standards were broadly average overall, though writing remains a comparative weakness. All pupils attained the expected level in science, but the number reaching the higher level was below average. This is because pupils have difficulties in analysing the results of experiments in sufficient depth. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those whose first language is not English achieve well because of the good level of support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils flourish in the atmosphere of mutual respect. Parents talk of approachable staff and happy children who thoroughly enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in the good attendance and high levels of participation of pupils in a wide variety of additional activities. Pupils understand how healthy food and vigorous exercise are important for their well-being. Organised activities such as Water Safety and Farm Safety help them to keep safe. Pupils say they feel secure as everyone gets on well together and this was evident in the playground where they cooperate in many games. Behaviour in lessons and in the playground is exemplary. They make an excellent contribution to the school community by belonging to the elected school council,

the sports council and the Eco council. They reach out to the wider community by inviting members of the community to share breakfast and by raising money for charities such as the Women's Refuge and Farm Africa. They have a good attitude to work and are becoming increasingly involved in evaluating their own learning. This is helping them to develop confidence and self-esteem. The advanced levels of personal development and secure academic skills prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and pupils learn well. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives which are shared with the pupils. Relationships are good and pupils are confident to try and to ask for help if needed. Pupils are given clear guidance about how well they have achieved in the lesson and this helps them to focus on what they need to do to do better. Teachers use practical resources effectively to help pupils understand, for example pupils in Years 1 and 2 shopped for cakes in their class bakery to aid their understanding of how to solve problems using money. Teachers use questions well to encourage pupils to explain their ideas and to assess how well pupils have understood. Work is marked regularly and teachers give good guidance to help pupils to improve. The skilled teaching assistants are well informed and make a good contribution to pupils' learning. In some years the presentation of pupils' work is untidy and this affects the development of handwriting and drawing of graphs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of pupils well. The excellent programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) promotes pupils' personal development very effectively. There is a very good range of sporting and other activities, including a residential activity holiday, to enrich the curriculum. The cookery club is very popular and helps pupils understand how to prepare a healthy diet. The good emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy skills is helping pupils to make good progress. Suitable importance is placed on investigating and experimenting in science but pupils have not developed the precise scientific language for recording their conclusions. There has been a good improvement in resources for ICT since the last inspection and these are being used well to improve pupils' skills and support learning in other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The good level of care and individual support provided by the school is appreciated by pupils and parents. All the recommended procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place. The strong ethos of consideration for others and mutual respect provides clear guidance for pupils' own excellent attitudes and behaviour. Pupils with learning difficulties and those whose first language is not English receive good support to help them participate in lessons and so they achieve well. The school has very effective links with other professionals and is quick to obtain specialist support where needed.

There are good systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress and these are being used well to plan for the needs of individuals. The school has introduced good systems to guide

pupils to help them to improve, particularly in writing. It is too soon to have had an impact on overall standards but the work in pupils' books indicates some improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The very good relationships fostered by the headteacher and the emphasis on caring for the individual promotes pupils' personal development and well-being very well. The school's evaluation of its work is generally accurate and is being used effectively to raise standards. Improvements in teaching have resulted in sustained improvements in attainment in Key Stage 1 and the school's actions to improve writing are beginning to have an impact through the school. The systematic analysis of pupils' progress is helping all to achieve well. Well informed governors provide valuable support to the school. The development of strong provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has helped the school to successfully smooth out fluctuations in children's skills from year to year when they start school. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. Pupils have shared a residential break with pupils from a different background and the school is looking to develop more regular cooperation. The school is twinned with a school for disabled pupils to share opportunities for play. There have been good improvements since the last inspection and the school has a good capacity to improve further.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

18 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bickerstaffe Voluntary Controlled Church of England School, Lancashire L39 0EH

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited you in school. I enjoyed talking to you all and joining in with your singing in your assembly. I could smell the wonderful Irish stew that the Reception children were making on St Patrick's Day and I was really pleased when they gave me some to eat.

I agree with you and your parents that Bickerstaffe is a good school. In fact some things about it are outstanding. I am sure that your parents will be proud to know that I think your personal development, including your behaviour, is excellent.

The school takes good care of you all and there is always an adult to give extra help to those who need it. Teachers spend a lot of time planning your lessons and making it clear to you what you have to do to succeed. This enables you to judge for yourselves how much you have learned in the lesson. You told me how much you enjoy the extra activities which the teachers provide. You work hard and make good progress to reach the standard which is expected for your age by the time you leave school.

Children in the Reception class have an excellent start in school and they make very good progress during the year.

When I inspect a school it is part of my job to suggest ways that even a good school could be better. In your school the adults are going to help you to:

- improve your writing by making sure you know the best language to use when writing for different purposes
- analyse the results of your experiments in science in Key Stage 2 more carefully so that more of you can achieve the higher Level 5.

I hope you continue to enjoy school so much and best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Shirley Herring

Lead inspector