

Balderstone St Leonard's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119415
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	327029
Inspection dates	7–8 May 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 aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	99
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	Dr Teresa Roberts
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Finch
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Commons Lane Balderstone Blackburn Lancashire BB2 7LL
Telephone number	01254769150

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	7–8 May 2009
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Fax number

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

This smaller-than-average sized rural school is in a comparatively advantaged locality. The school serves the parish and also welcomes pupils from further afield. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups has increased over recent years and is now just below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises of one Reception Class.

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. Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding.

Pupils say how much they enjoy the good range of clubs on offer and the excellent, healthy lunches they help to serve in Betty's Bistro. Attendance is well-above average. Pupils feel safe because of the excellent relationships amongst all of the school community. They make an excellent contribution to the school, as monitors or as members of their family group. They are confident in themselves and work well with each other and this prepares them very well for the future.

Pupils enter the school with a range of skills that, overall, are typical for their age. They make good progress and reach standards that are above average when they leave. In the 2008 national tests in Key Stage 2, standards were above average and pupils achieved well. Standards were well-above average in English and approximately two thirds of pupils achieved the higher level. Several members of staff are recognised by the local authority as having considerable expertise in teaching literacy and this strength has resulted in very good standards in English. The number of pupils reaching the typically expected level in mathematics was above average, though the number achieving the higher level was broadly average.

Teaching is good overall. Pupils respond well to high expectations and show very good attitudes to work and excellent behaviour. Some teaching in English is outstanding and so pupils reach a high standard. The pace of learning in mathematics is a little slower and pupils, especially the more able, are not always challenged sufficiently, for example when investigating and solving problems. Marking in English is of a high quality. The curriculum is good. The strong programme of personal, social and health education and the wide range of sporting activities support pupils' excellent personal development. The school has good links with other local schools, to extend learning opportunities.

Several parents commented that a great strength of the school is the way the older pupils care for the younger ones. This follows the good examples of care shown by all the adults. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified and supported at an early stage, so that they make good progress and achieve well. Pupils receive very clear guidance on how to improve their writing, though guidance for improving their mathematics is less developed.

The school is led and managed well. The headteacher leads by example, in listening to others, both adults and pupils, and through her expertise in the classroom. The school monitors and evaluates its work carefully, to bring about improvements, for example in improving writing. Subject leaders monitor test results and planning but are not yet involved fully in monitoring learning and achievement. Governors have a good understanding of the needs of the school and are involved fully in planning for the future. The improvements since the last inspection, including those in standards in English and in personal development, combined with a clear vision for the future, indicate a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Reception class with a range of skills that, overall, are typical for their age. They make good progress and almost all children reach and many exceed the recommended goals by the time they enter Year 1. They make particularly good progress in reading because of the well-structured programme for teaching skills in letters and sounds. Children respond

very well to the high emphasis placed on personal, social and emotional skills and so their personal development is outstanding. Children enjoy school and are very keen to choose an activity as soon as they arrive. They are developing a very good understanding of a healthy lifestyle as they have a fruit snack and enjoy regular exercise in the large hall or outside. They feel safe because they develop excellent relationships with staff and also with older children in their family group. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well. The teacher plans a good range of purposeful, practical activities and uses the rural surroundings extensively to extend children's learning. Parents appreciate being involved in their children's learning and many took up an invitation to join their children in class for the day. Provision for children's welfare is excellent. The very good procedures for introducing children to school help them to settle quickly and develop positive attitudes to learning from an early age. There are good systems for assessing and tracking children's progress and identifying and addressing specific needs at an early stage.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical skills in investigating and solving problems and give them clearer guidance on what they need to do to improve.
- Increase subject leaders' involvement in monitoring pupils' learning and achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and pupils' achievement is good. While cohorts in this small school vary from year-to-year, pupils enter the school with a range of skills that, overall, are typical for their age. They make good progress during their time in school and standards are above average when they leave. The recent whole-school focus has led to a good improvement in standards in writing. In the 2008 national assessments for seven-year-olds, standards were above average in reading and writing and broadly average in mathematics. More pupils achieved the higher level in reading and writing than in mathematics. Achievement was good overall, though satisfactory in mathematics. Pupils achieve well in Key Stage 2 and standards have been above average for the past two years. In the 2008 national tests, standards were well-above average in English and two thirds of pupils achieved the higher level 5. This reflects the strong expertise amongst the staff in teaching literacy. Standards in mathematics were lower than in English because pupils had not gained sufficient experience in using and developing their skills in solving problems. The school has adopted the new framework for mathematics and there are encouraging signs of some improvement for current pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because of the good level of support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Pupils say how much they enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in attendance, which is well-above average. Older pupils accept the many opportunities to take responsibility readily, particularly in providing role models and caring for younger pupils in their family group. Pupils speak very positively about school and say they feel valued and that their views are listened to. They were involved fully in the reorganisation of lunches and are proud to serve and enjoy healthy food at Betty's Bistro! They feel safe, secure in the knowledge that they can speak to any adult should they have a problem. They play together

very well at playtimes and behaviour is excellent. They make an excellent contribution to the school community, for example, as school councillors, and to the wider community by joining in parish events and welcoming people to school events such as the Summer Fun Day. By the time pupils leave the school, they are confident and articulate and have good basic skills. This prepares them very well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and pupils learn well. Pupils respond very well to teachers' high expectations and are eager to learn. Some teaching of literacy is outstanding, so pupils reach a high standard in English. In one excellent lesson observed, the teacher made very good use of resources to build up pupils' enthusiasm and increase their enjoyment and understanding of the poem of 'The Lion and Albert'. Skilled teaching assistants are deployed well and make a good contribution to pupils' learning. The pace of learning in mathematics is a little slower and more able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently. The marking of pupils' work in English is of a high quality and so pupils know precisely what they need to do to improve. The school is extending this good practice in marking to mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. The strong programme of personal, social and health education and the wide range of sporting activities assist pupils' personal development very well. There is a good range of additional activities, including a residential visit, to support learning and increase pupils' enjoyment of school. The clear focus on developing pupils' reading and writing skills has resulted in very good standards in English. Basic numeracy skills are developed systematically and well, though there are limited opportunities for pupils to use and develop these skills in solving problems. The school has good links with other local schools to extend learning opportunities, for example some pupils in Year 6 contribute to the joint production of the 'MOBS magazine'. The creative aspects of the curriculum are catered for well, with pupils having the opportunity to learn an instrument and of helping to organise and taking part in the Summer Concert.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All the recommended procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place. There is a great emphasis amongst pupils on caring for each other, following the good role models set by all the adults, and pupils say this makes the school a happy place to be. The decision to organise pupils into family groups of different ages and including an adult has been successful in making lunchtimes a very popular social occasion and fostering an ethos where children care for each other. There are good systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress and these are used well to identify those pupils who need extra help, at an early stage. They receive good support in class and so pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. The school seeks additional help from other professionals when needed. Pupils receive clear guidance on how to improve their writing and this has contributed well to the very good standards in English.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is led and managed well. Based firmly on the school's Christian tradition, the headteacher leads a team who have a clear commitment to promoting the well-being and inclusion of all the pupils, contributing to pupils' excellent personal development. The school monitors and evaluates its work carefully and accurately and uses the information to bring about improvements. The reorganisation of lunches has led to healthier options and a large increase in the number of pupils taking school lunches. The recent focus on writing has led to a good improvement in standards. The school recognises the need to improve standards in mathematics and this is to be a focus in the coming year. Subject leaders monitor teachers' planning and test results thoroughly but they are not yet involved fully in monitoring and evaluating learning and achievement in their subjects. Governance is good. Governors are well-informed and involved fully in the life of the school. The school promotes community cohesion well. The increase in the number of pupils from minority ethnic groups has resulted in a greater understanding of different faiths and a mutual respect for different cultures for all pupils. The recognition of festivals celebrated by other faiths is now part of the wider curriculum. The school has plans to give pupils a global perspective, by linking with a school in India.

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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?	2
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?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
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?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

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

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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Balderstone St Leonard's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School,
Lancashire, BB2 7LL

Thank you for making me so welcome when I inspected your school recently. I enjoyed talking to you all and joining you in lessons. Hearing the poem of 'The Lion and Albert' was quite a treat. I agree with you and your parents that Balderstone St Leonard's is a good school. In fact, some things about it are outstanding. You make an excellent contribution to the life of the school through your very good attendance and behaviour. You are, rightly, proud of how you look after each other in your family groups. I think Betty's Bistro is a wonderful idea and certainly helps you appreciate healthy food. Clearly, you enjoy all the different clubs you attend.

I spent a lovely time in the Reception class and the children are making good progress from starting school. I am sure they will really enjoy working in the outdoor area, when it is finished. Teaching is good, so you learn well. All the adults take good care of you and there is always someone on hand to give you extra help when needed. You reach a very high standard in English by the time you leave the school and a good number of you reach Level 5. This is because literacy lessons are very interesting and challenging and teachers let you know exactly what you need to do to make your work even better. Not quite so many of you reach Level 5 in mathematics.

It is part of my job when I visit a school to suggest ways in which even a good school could be better. I have asked the school to help your learning in mathematics, by giving you more opportunities to develop your skills in solving problems and by giving you more detail on how you can improve. I have also suggested that the teachers in charge of subjects could keep a really close watch on how well you are learning in those areas.

Thank you once again. I hope you enjoy the rest of the summer term, particularly the Summer Concert.

Yours faithfully

Shirley Herring

Lead inspector