

Dalton St Michael's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119493
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	327050
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Nigel Cromey-Hawke

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)	57
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	Mrs Maureen Faulkner
Headteacher	Mrs Gaynor Goodson
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Higher Lane Dalton Wigan Lancashire WN8 7RP

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small primary school. All pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average but the number with a statement of special educational need is high. Significant numbers of pupils join the school after the usual entry in Reception, often with social, emotional or learning difficulties. The school has the Healthy Schools and Sports Activemark awards. Early Years Foundation Stage children are taught in a Reception class and others in mixed-age classes. A parents and toddlers group is available to all children for a short period once a week.

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 which makes a significant difference to the life chances of its pupils. It provides excellent levels of care, guidance and support for its pupils and, as a result, their personal development is outstanding. Parents are almost unanimous in their support for the school and the way it is led and managed.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge, understanding and skills that are below those typical for their age, especially in personal and social development and in their use of language. They make good progress and enter Key Stage 1 broadly average, but with some still below in these two areas. Many pupils join the school at different times in Years 1 to 6 and, given the small size of the year groups, this affects the overall standards in the school. Nevertheless, it is clear that achievement is good. The vast majority of pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. Progress is good especially in improving their initial weaker social and language skills. However, a few more able pupils do not always make enough progress and the school is starting to focus more on the needs of these pupils. Standards on leaving the school at Key Stage 2 are average in English, mathematics and science. Previously weak standards in science have been dramatically improved. Current pupils are on track to meet the challenging targets the school has set itself.

The personal development of pupils is outstanding, supported by the excellent curriculum that provides a wide range of interesting activities and learning experiences in the mixed-age classes. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used especially well by both teachers and pupils. A website successfully enables parents and pupils to access resources, assessments and homework from their own homes. Pupils enthusiastically take up a variety of responsibilities within the school, helping it and each other with maturity and compassion. The school provides excellent care, guidance and support for its pupils, especially those with social, emotional and learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These are helped by the large number of adults supporting in classrooms and with intervention work. All child protection and safeguarding requirements are met. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent and pupils say they feel highly valued, safe and know what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle. As a result, pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is outstanding, helping to build their confidence and essential life skills for the future. While the school has not formally audited its community needs it knows these well and its contribution to community cohesion is good, especially at the local level. Links with the church are very strong and add significantly to pupils' life experiences through the outdoor pursuits opportunities it provides and which are enthusiastically taken up by pupils. Teaching is good, with some outstanding practice. Challenge for the more able is being developed but the impact of this has yet to be seen consistently across the school.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and staff are dedicated to providing the best quality care and support for learning. They have created an ethos of trust, security and respect, and a stimulating learning environment that all who know the school value enormously. Self-evaluation is good but the variety and complexity of systems for recording progress are cumbersome and do not make it easy to analyse achievement and progress. Nevertheless, the school gives good attention to equality of opportunity as is reflected in the focus now being given to the more able pupils. Governors know the school well and support and challenge it rigorously, especially through visits to classrooms to assist with literacy and through discussions with subject staff. The school provides good value for money and has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When they start in Reception most children have skills that are below those typical for this age. Their communication and social skills are often particularly underdeveloped. Staff work very hard to address these weaknesses. They create an environment in which the children are exceptionally well looked after and where they feel happy and secure. Children feel confident to contribute to activities and to ask for help when they need it. Many children make particularly good progress in developing their social skills, learning to share resources and cooperate with each other. There is a good balance between adult-led, whole-class activities and opportunities for more independent individual and group learning. These are well matched to the children's range of abilities and good use is made of both indoor and outdoor learning spaces. The movement of children around class and outside is well managed and carried out safely. Teaching is good, with a particular emphasis upon acquiring key skills in language and numeracy. Children particularly enjoy the start to many of their sessions in the mixed-age class with Years 1 and 2. As a result, they make good progress towards the expected standards at the beginning of Year 1, although some remain below expectations in their personal and language development. Leadership and management are good and parents comment very positively on the transition into the school, helped by the well run Dalton Dinkies toddlers group. The curriculum is well planned and integrated with that of Key Stage 1 and pupils' progress is being increasingly carefully monitored.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve the progress of the more able pupils.
- Simplify and embed the various systems for monitoring pupils' learning so that tracking of progress becomes more effective.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Pupils enter Key Stage 1 with average standards although literacy and personal development are weaker in some cases. The small classes are added to regularly by pupils entering the school at times other than Reception. These pupils often have significant learning or social and emotional difficulties. They are fully integrated with the life of the school and make good academic progress due to the excellent care, guidance and support they receive. This changing nature of the cohort and the small size of each group affect the school's tests results and current standards which at the end of Year 6 are broadly average. However, it is clear that pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. Many overcome their initial weaker language and social skills. However, the more able pupils do not always make enough progress. Only a few pupils reach above average standards especially in science. This subject area has been significantly improved although the impact has yet to be seen in end of year results. Current pupils are on track to meet the challenging targets the school has set itself.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being, including the pupils' spiritual, moral, creative, social and cultural development, are outstanding. This represents excellent improvement for many during

their time in school. Pupils say they feel safe, highly valued and they clearly enjoy their learning. They respect each other's views and say that bullying is rare and swiftly dealt with. Behaviour is excellent, both within classes and around the school. Older pupils are very good at taking on responsibilities as members of the school and Eco councils, classroom resource managers, Buddies or sports leaders to younger children. They work very well with the local community, raising funds for charities and learning from the school's international links. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to eat healthily and stay fit, reflecting well the Healthy Schools award. They recently featured in the county healthy living conference. Many take advantage of the excellent opportunities for outdoor pursuits, provided through links with the local church, enjoying challenging situations within a climate of acceptable risk. Pupils play safely and move around the school sensibly and well. Attendance for the vast majority is good and there are no persistent absentees. The outstanding attitudes and behaviour of pupils, together with their well developed ICT and sound academic skills prepares them well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good so pupils learn well and make good progress. In the best lessons the pace and challenge ensure that pupils are interested and sustain their enthusiasm. A good range of activities meets their needs well in the combined-age classes. Interactive whiteboards and other ICT are used effectively to promote independent learning and bring exciting resources into the classroom. In one outstanding lesson seen, pupils researched and then prepared their own microscope slides of flower pollen, recorded their observations and made predictions on the basis of their investigations. High quality learning resulted and pupils enjoyed the challenges made of them. In some cases, teachers spend too long explaining what needs to be done and some start to lose interest. Teachers are beginning to focus more on challenging the more able pupils although the impact of this on overall standards is not yet evident. Teaching assistants, governors and other helpers provide very good support, often taking small groups for intensive booster sessions. Marking is of a high standard across most of the school and provides clear guidance on what standards have been reached and what pupils have to do to improve further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and contributes significantly to pupils' personal and academic development. The everyday curriculum is broad and balanced, with a wide range of activities planned to meet pupils' needs. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have their needs fully met and more attention is now being given to the needs of the more able. There is a strong focus upon the essential skills of reading, writing and upon pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, especially through the outstanding use of the arts within all aspects of the school's work. All pupils benefit from the outstanding work the school carries out to develop social and emotional learning. Links with local schools have been well used to provide specialist ICT teaching each week and pupils' skills here are highly developed. Theme days and growing national and international links help pupils appreciate the diversity of the modern world. The classrooms and corridors sparkle with displays and resources that catch pupils' imagination and stimulate their learning. For example, high quality design and technology is celebrated through excellent three-dimensional posters of pupils' work around the school.

There is an excellent programme of sport and outdoor pursuits, recognised by the Sports Activemark award. A wide range of extra curricular activities are very well supported by pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Arrangements to safeguard pupils are fully in place. Helped by its small size the school has an excellent system for identifying and monitoring pupils with emotional, behavioural or learning difficulties, many of whom join the school at times other than is usual. The care and support they receive is excellent, helped by the large number of teaching assistants and other adults who assist with learning in the school. The school works extremely well with a wide variety of external agencies to meet the often considerable needs of many of its pupils and parents are unanimous in their praise for this aspect of the school's work. One typically commented that, 'Since starting at St Michael's my child has really gained in confidence and made great progress. St Michaels is a wonderful, caring school and I feel that they will bring out the best in him.' The school has very detailed systems for tracking and recording the progress of individual pupils. This information is used well to set pupils' challenging targets and identifying those needing support. The complexity of the system makes it more difficult to draw overall conclusions about progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a passionate vision for the school and has worked tirelessly to achieve it, helped by a highly committed and talented staff. Buildings, resources and staffing levels have been significantly improved under her leadership and a curriculum put in place that provides a vibrant learning environment for pupils. The impact of this is seen in the outstanding personal development of the pupils and the unanimous support of parents for the way it is led and managed. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good, helped by strong local links through the church and partner schools. National and international partnerships are growing and this is impacting well on pupils' understanding of the diversity of the world. Good self-evaluation means that the school knows what it needs to do to make more progress. The school has developed a variety of systems for tracking the progress of pupils. They are useful tools to identify individual progress, but are cumbersome systems and so less effective in providing information to inform strategic planning about standards and achievement. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and support and challenge it well.

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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?	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?	2
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	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	2
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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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**

11 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dalton St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Lancashire, WN8 7RP

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I inspected your school recently. You were very friendly, polite and enthusiastic about what you do. You told me a lot of interesting things about your school and you are clearly very proud of it. Dalton St Michael's Church of England Primary is a good school, and some things are outstanding. These are some of the things that I think are particularly good.

- You get a good start to your learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and receive excellent care there.
- You have very positive attitudes to learning and your behaviour is excellent. Well done.
- You make good progress because you are well taught, your timetable is full of exciting learning opportunities and you get excellent support.
- You are developing into delightful, healthy young people. Well done.
- The leadership and management of the school are good and facilities have improved enormously.

There are two things I have suggested to your school to make it an even better place to learn. Firstly, I think that those of you who find learning easier than others should attain higher standards. Secondly, the school should streamline its many ways of recording your progress in order that it can get a clearer picture of how well you are learning. This will help in its planning for future improvements.

You can help by telling your teachers how you learn best and if you have any problems. You can also help by continuing to behave well and working hard as you do at the moment. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Nigel Cromey-Hawke

Lead inspector