

Garstang St Thomas' Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119528
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	327059
Inspection dates	7–8 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Jennie Platt

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)	161
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	Rev Michael Gisbourne
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Ife
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Kepple Lane Garstang Preston Lancashire PR3 1PB

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller-than-average school serving the town of Garstang. A much lower-than-average number of pupils is entitled to free school meals. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average and an above-average number have a statement of special educational needs. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision consists of children in one Reception class. The school has a children's centre on site and provides a before and after school club, which was not part of this inspection.

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, with several outstanding features. It deserves the high reputation it has in the community. One parent sums up its many strengths as 'All staff are friendly, caring and very kind and my child loves the school and feels part of a wonderful community.' The school has a track record of above-average standards, underpinned by outstanding care and personal development. The extremely happy and secure atmosphere combines well with industrious learning. Pupils enjoy school thoroughly and look forward to lessons. They are confident, mature and responsible young people. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the community. Opportunities to accept responsibilities in school are many and varied, including membership of the teaching and learning group and pupils' parliament. Pupils' involvement in conservation activities and support for charities reflect their recognition of their role in the wider community. The pupils' energetic play and careful choice of food typifies their thorough understanding of the importance of keeping fit and healthy. The achievement of the Healthy Schools Award and Activemark show the school's promotion of these important lifestyles.

Achievement is good. Children start school with skills that are broadly typical for their age and make good progress. At the end of Year 2 standards have been broadly average in the past but have improved this year to above average because more pupils are exceeding the level expected for their age. Standards by the end of Year 6 are well-above average in mathematics and science and above average in English. In science and mathematics, an impressive number of pupils reach the higher Level 5 and the number is increasing in English.

Good teaching and a stimulating curriculum are pivotal to the pupils' good progress. Some excellent teaching was seen, which included brisk pace, challenge to pupils to work independently and an enthusiasm which inspires pupils. All teachers provide variety, which sustains pupils' interest. Teachers insist on pupils doing their best work and only in the presentation of work is there some inconsistency in teachers' expectations, especially in the quality of handwriting. The curriculum is rich and exciting and encourages a love of school. Parents and pupils appreciate the excellent range and quality of after-school clubs and visits. Displays of work and an impressive array of trophies reflect not only success but also the many opportunities made available to pupils.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is a most effective leader, especially in supporting staff and delegating roles and responsibilities. Self-evaluation is collaborative and thorough. Consequently, the school knows its strengths and weaknesses very well and is eager to build on its many strengths. A strong governing body is both supportive and challenging. Complacency does not exist in this school and the drive to move forward makes it well-placed for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get a good start to school life. Parents value the sensitive introduction and the excellent attention given to children's welfare. Children feel safe and understand the daily routines. They know the importance of hygiene and healthy eating. From starting school with skills broadly typical for their age, children make good progress and start Year 1 with above-average skills, except in writing, which is slightly below average. Personal development is good and children grow in independence. They enjoy lessons because of the good teaching, which makes enjoyment

paramount to effective learning. The outdoor area is used extremely well and the availability of wellingtons and waterproofs make sure going outside is an everyday activity. Occasionally, there are too many activities provided, or it is not clear what children are expected to learn. This leads to some children moving too quickly between activities and staff being not always sure about the main purpose of the tasks. Nevertheless, staff provide good support to children and the strong team approach ensures all are busy and enjoying their day. Effective leadership has ensured all current requirements are in place, including safeguarding and the assessment of children's progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage clarify always what it is that children are intended to learn and provide more opportunities for writing.
- Ensure consistency in teachers' expectations of the presentation of pupils' work, especially their handwriting.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Children start school with skills and abilities that are broadly typical for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and start in Year 1 with above-average skills, except in writing. Standards in the teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 have been average over the last three years, except in reading, which has been above average. The school has raised standards by giving more attention to the more-able pupils. This has led to an increase in the number of pupils exceeding the level expected for their age and current standards are above average in Year 2, with significant acceleration in the progress of the more able pupils in writing and mathematics.

The results of national tests at the end of Year 6 have reflected high standards, except for a slight dip in 2008. Nevertheless, school data show that pupils in that year made good progress from their starting points. Current standards are well-above average in science and mathematics and above average in English. Reading is stronger than writing but this is improving as more pupils exceed the expected level. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Those with very specific needs make excellent progress and this reflects the school's outstanding provision for these pupils and a determination to provide for all pupils. Staff are exceptionally well-trained to meet the pupils' individual needs and support is excellent, with close consultation between staff.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy school thoroughly and this is reflected in their exemplary attitudes to learning and excellent behaviour. Of their many favourite features of the school, friendship is top of their list. It is not surprising attendance is above average. Pupils listen closely to advice and, as a result, they have a detailed understanding of how to keep safe and look after themselves. A very small number of pupils and parents expressed concern that a very small number of pupils do not always consider the effect of their actions on others. However, pupils say they feel safe and are confident staff are readily available to resolve any worries. Pupils are very eager to lead a healthy lifestyle. Playtimes are very energetic interludes to the day and pupils are justifiably proud of the school's many sporting successes.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils are helpful and respectful towards one another. They care for their environment, as in their successful involvement in the Entente Florale contest (Europe in Bloom). Pupils have an excellent sense of community. They carry out many duties in school responsibly, such as helping at lunch time organising daily clubs. The enthusiastic school council members organise many activities including fundraising. Strong links exist with the local church and the community and pupils are involved with helping elderly and solitary residents. These many strengths and high basic skills ensure pupils are extremely well-prepared for future life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is consistently good and some outstanding teaching was seen in Key Stage 2. Relationships are very good throughout the school and lessons are orderly and well-organised. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach and ask probing questions, especially in mathematics, where pupils are challenged to explain their calculations. Very good use of assessment information leads to work being matched to pupils' individual needs effectively. The outstanding lessons seen moved at a scintillating pace, with a high degree of challenge. This challenge is not seen in all lessons and sometimes the use of worksheets that are less demanding restricts pupils' progress. Teachers mark work regularly and include information on how to improve. However, it is not always made clear to pupils that their handwriting could be neater. The focus throughout the school is on capturing pupils' interest and this is clear in the imaginative range of work produced. Classrooms are stimulating learning environments.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils. A strong focus on literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology and science underpins pupils' good progress. Evidence of the richness of the curriculum is clear to see in the high-quality work on display. Music is a strong aspect of daily life with high expectations from the specialist teacher. The school is in the process of making the curriculum even more creative by linking subjects together in topics to make learning more purposeful. This new approach is being trialled in some classes and checks to ensure all skills are taught are ongoing.

Enrichment activities are outstanding and provide many new experiences, as well as promoting self-esteem. These include educational visits out of school, visitors to the school and a wide range of after-school clubs. Pupils appreciate that these activities change regularly so there is always something new on the horizon. Maypole and clogging are two of the more unusual clubs run by local dance teachers. Global links are evident in the sponsorship of a child in Uganda and the involvement in Fairtrade. Visits from African mango farmers really bring home to pupils the purpose of equality in trade.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides a highly supportive ethos, which is based on mutual respect and trust. Each child is valued as an individual, in line with the school's mission statement. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements. Pupils know exactly what they can or cannot do in

school because they contributed to the writing of the school's behaviour policy. Partnerships with other agencies are excellent. The school exploits fully the expert advice and resources available at the on-site children's centre. This is most beneficial in supporting parents and young children before they enter school. Parents appreciate that care is provided for all pupils before and after school.

Excellent procedures track pupils' academic progress closely. Information is used effectively to identify pupils who need extra help, either individually or in a small group. Pupils feel that they are well-supported in their learning and, with the help of their targets, know clearly how to improve. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or difficulties receive excellent support from experienced and well-informed teaching assistants. The recent introduction of the nurture room is extremely beneficial for those pupils who have emotional problems.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

One of the headteacher's many strengths is her approachability and this has earned her the confidence of parents and pupils. She is determined that all changes are team decisions and go at a pace that suits the school. As a result, the school's vision is shared by the entire school community, including parents and pupils. Priorities are turned into action, with the focus on raising standards. The impact of change is clear in the good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have improved, especially in writing and the use of assessment and the monitoring of teaching is more effective. Senior managers and subject leaders provide a good steer for their colleagues, yet more so in English and mathematics than in other subjects where action plans do not always use assessment information effectively to check that priorities are linked to improving pupils' progress.

Governance is good. Governors bring to the school a wide range of experiences, which are exploited fully by the school, especially in the aspects of health and safety and finance. They are actively involved in school life and ensure legal requirements are met. Community cohesion is excellent and is at the heart of the school. All are welcomed and nurtured. Equality of opportunity is outstanding and support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is especially well-organised. Links are both local and extensive and are planned and evaluated carefully to check they provide a real sense of belonging for all communities. This is a school that values everyone and extremely positive relationships exist between all. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and the school is well placed to continue to improve.

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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	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	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	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?	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	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Garstang St Thomas' Church of England Primary School, Lancashire, PR3 1PB

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave the inspectors when we inspected your school. We had a very enjoyable time and the information you shared with us has helped in the writing of this report. You go to a good school, which has several excellent features. You contribute to this especially in your personal development, which is outstanding. Yours is a very friendly and caring school and those of you who mentioned some concerns assured us that they know how to resolve them. We are glad you find your staff helpful and know support is at hand. Your behaviour is exemplary. You have an excellent understanding of how to support the community. This includes the many duties you carry out diligently every day in school. This effort all contributes to your happy school. Your support for global issues, such as conservation and Fairtrade, reflects your understanding of your role in preserving the world. You have an excellent range of clubs and activities. It is good to see that you enjoy these and especially keeping fit. We also thoroughly enjoyed watching you dance.

Teaching is good and we saw some excellent lessons. Teachers make work interesting for you and this enables you to make good progress. Standards in your school are above average and many of you are reaching high levels. We have asked the school to look at two things. Firstly, to ensure that the children in Reception are clear about what they are learning and improve their progress in writing. Secondly, for teachers to insist that you all write as neatly as possible and present your work well. You can help by always doing your best and tidiest work.

Your parents expressed their pleasure about your school and we agree it is a wonderful place for you to learn. We wish you much happiness for the future.

Yours faithfully

Jennie Platt and Barbara Martin

Inspectors