

Blackpool St John's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119595
Local Authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	327082
Inspection date	12 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Dave Byrne

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)	230
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 Gill Ward
Headteacher	Miss Jo Snape
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Church Street Blackpool Lancashire FY1 3PA
Telephone number	01253 625756

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	12 December 2008
Inspection number	327082

Fax number

01253 290685

Age group	4-11
Inspection date	12 December 2008
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the personal development of pupils and the effectiveness of the school in overcoming the many barriers to learning, including attendance
- the quality of support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- the effectiveness of the management systems in maintaining the standards in the core subjects given the imminent change in leadership.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found enough evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, are rather modest. Evidence was gathered from observation of lessons, scrutiny of school documents and samples of pupils' work, discussions with the headteacher, teachers and support staff, pupils and governors. Parents' views, as reflected in the Ofsted questionnaire, were also considered.

Description of the school

The school is of an average size. It serves a community with high levels of social and economic deprivation. A well above average percentage of pupils are entitled to free school meals and the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is around twice the national average. In some classes there is a high movement of pupils in and out of school at times other than the normal. A small percentage have English as an additional language. There is provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). At the end of this term, the headteacher is moving to a promoted post. The school is currently in temporary accommodation awaiting a new building, due for completion in the summer of 2009. Many awards have been gained by the school. It has the Investors in People Award, the Artsmark (silver), an Activemark, the Football Association Charter Mark, the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Inclusion Award for family participation in learning. Links exist with schools in many countries which have contributed to the acquisition of the International Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school which successfully achieves its aim that 'Everyone matters in God's world'. Inspirational leadership by the headteacher, supported by a very strong governing body, has created a dynamic and dedicated staff team who work tirelessly to give the best possible education. Pupils love learning and respond very well to excellent teaching and outstanding levels of care. The excellent care assists pupils in overcoming many barriers to learning. At all times pupils are safe and secure, and all required checks are in place to safeguard pupils.

The school is rightly held in high regard by everyone who knows it. Very close links with a range of outside agencies add to the extremely high quality of support provided for all pupils, but most noticeably for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a strong bond with parents. Their views are valued and much effort is made to involve them in their children's education. Pupils also applaud all that the school does, saying that they 'love school and hate missing even a single day'. They adore their teachers and love the exciting lessons and activities provided for them. This is one reason why, despite considerable difficulties hindering the attendance of some pupils, the vast majority attend regularly and attendance is currently close to average.

Pupils thrive at St John's. All do very well, whether they have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, English as an additional language or are able, gifted and talented. Good progress occurs in Key Stage 1 and standards are usually average at the end of Year 2. By the time they leave Year 6, the proportion of pupils reaching the standards expected for their age has increased. Whilst standards are typically close to the national average they are well above that of schools in a similar context. This represents outstanding achievement given the exceptionally low starting points. The progress of pupils in English, mathematics and science is excellent. It is most noticeable in writing and in mathematics where the proportion attaining at the highest levels is at least average and often above. Pupils also do very well in physical education, and aspects of art and music.

A significant factor in the excellent academic achievement is the quality of teaching. Teachers, together with their support staff, believe in the ability of their pupils. They make excellent use of assessment to track the progress of each pupil. Activities are skilfully tailored to meet every pupil's need. They are often practical and fun, and contain high expectations for them to work with reasonable independence. They even like homework; one pupil commented that it 'was very hard but lots of fun!' The pupils' enthusiasm for learning shows in the way they work hard and gain confidence. All pupils know how well they are doing, and understand what they need to do to improve. Specialist sports and music teachers enhance pupils' learning.

Pupils make excellent progress in their personal development, overcoming many barriers to learning on the way. Initiatives such as peer massage, simple meditation and yoga help pupils to be calm and feel safe and secure. This contributes to pupils' readiness to learn. By the age of 11, pupils develop into mature, thoughtful and very caring individuals. Parents and staff have been key partners in developing a very effective behaviour policy. As a result, behaviour is usually excellent, although there are occasions when an individual pupil expresses frustration or anger inappropriately. Much is done to promote amongst pupils an awareness of why it is important to care for their bodies through maintaining personal hygiene, eating sensibly and exercising regularly. Most pupils know about the choices required to do this. The views of pupils

are respected. They talk proudly of their role as class and school councillors and willingly take on many responsibilities within the day-to-day life of the school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, as is pupils' contribution to community cohesion. Strong and innovative links with schools internationally means that they value ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic differences. They raise substantial funds for charities and develop a strong moral conscience. Very good relationships are formed with others, and pupils acquire very good attitudes to work and take pride in what they do. These features prepare them extremely well for their next stage of education.

The curriculum is outstanding. Whether it is exploring life in Victorian times or developing their skills of writing an argument for and against having a television in their bedrooms, learning is made meaningful and fun. Very good initiatives are used to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of English, mathematics and science within a broad and varied curriculum. The provision of extra-curricular activities has grown in recent years and, despite the challenge of moving into temporary accommodation, access to sport, music, mathematics and computer clubs has been maintained.

Underpinning the school's success is the high quality of leadership and management at all levels within the school. The headteacher sets the tone and is unstinting in her efforts to move the school forward. Inclusion has a high priority and pupils' academic and personal achievement are equally important. Good advances have been made since the last inspection and, given the very effective senior management team and strong governing body, the school has an excellent capacity to improve in future. There is no fear of learning from others, or of seeking advice where needed. The support of the local authority personnel, for example, in offering guidance for literacy and mathematics is excellent. The governing body is extremely well led and minimised the recent disruptions on pupils' education as the school prepares for the new building.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the EYFS are outstanding. They enable children to have a flying start to their education. From the word go, parents and carers are encouraged to get involved in their children's education. Many children start with skills that are very low compared to those typical for their age. They are exceptionally low in their personal, social and emotional development, in their speech and language, in their creative development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. The school deals with these very well and makes sure children are given excellent support. Excellent assessments are made of each child and swift action is taken to start to improve the levels that pupils are working at. Whilst a high proportion has learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the needs of those who are advanced are recognised and planned for too. This attention to meeting every child's needs results in excellent progress and achievement. Staff successfully overcome the current limitations of the temporary accommodation to provide children with a lively and exciting curriculum suited to their abilities. Their planning is ambitious and sets high expectations for children. Much time is given by well trained staff to develop their confidence to speak and develop their language. Activities are fun and set within a theme; for example, as part of the festive theme, children learnt about aspects of mathematical development by exploring the relative sizes of Christmas presents and others 'wrote' letters to Santa. The excellent progress made by children in their time in the EYFS is not, however, sufficient for the children to catch up to the expectations for their age. By the start of Year 1, children are still below average, although their personal, social and emotional development is generally better.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no areas for improvement other than those already identified in the school improvement plan.

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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?	1
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	1

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?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
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?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

15 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blackpool St John's Church of England Primary School, Blackpool, FY1 3PA

My colleague and I have some lovely memories of our visit to your school. Please thank your parents or carers for sending in their views about the school. They are right to rate the school very highly. It is outstanding, which means that it provides you with an excellent education. It not only helps you to do well in subjects such as English, mathematics and science, but also enables you to become caring, mature individuals who are very well prepared to do well later in life.

We were impressed by the way your teachers encourage you to become confident with others and to enjoy lessons. Your behaviour is excellent most of the time and you treat others with care and respect. Because you feel safe and secure, you are able to learn in lessons. You all work very hard even when you find work difficult. In the time you are at St John's, you all improve rapidly. Your standards when you leave Year 6 are as good as expected for your age nationally, and better than in most similar schools.

You benefit from the school's close links with schools in other countries. This gives you a good knowledge and understanding of the features of cultures different from your own. Because you understand the importance of eating sensibly and acting safely, you have a good chance of staying healthy and well in future. Your teachers and support staff are excellent. They do very well in helping you to do as well as you can. The school gives you all a good start to life.

A key person in giving you all such a good start to life is your headteacher. Together with the staff and governors, she makes sure you all get the best possible deal. She sets high standards and gets the best out of the staff team.

We wish you all the very best for the move to your new school buildings. You have your part to play in the school's success by continuing to care for others and working as hard as you can.

Yours sincerely

Dave Byrne

Lead inspector