

St Cuthbert's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119615
Local Authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	327087
Inspection dates	20–21 May 2009
Reporting inspector	John Heap

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)	192
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 Jill Gibson
Headteacher	Mrs Janet Grime
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	St Alban's Road Darwen Lancashire BB3 0HY
Telephone number	01254 701336

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	20–21 May 2009
Inspection number	327087

Fax number

01254 761621

Age group 4-11

Inspection dates 20-21 May 2009

Inspection number 327087

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This school serves a mainly White British population in a residential area with private and social housing. The area is one of significant disadvantage. Small numbers of pupils come from a range of minority ethnic groups. A well above average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. A large proportion of pupils are in the care of the local authority. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and the proportion with a statement of special educational need is well above the norm. The school has a small Primary School Resource Provision (PSRP) for pupils with moderate to severe learning difficulties and other complex needs including speech, language and communication problems. A very small number of pupils speak English as an additional language. Children under five years of age are taught in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception) class. Extended provision includes before and after-school clubs, which are run by a private provider and did not form part of this inspection. The school has achieved Healthy School status and Activemark.

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 that provides good value for money. Pupils and their parents are very satisfied with the school's work. They are particularly pleased with the way that the school is willing and able to overcome challenging situations; a typical parental view is 'I feel confident that my child is being given the best start in life at St Cuthbert's'.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Plenty of activities reinforce pupils' good knowledge and understanding of the importance of leading healthy and safe lifestyles. Pupils contribute well to the school and the wider community. Evidence from parents and pupils, and above average attendance, point clearly to pupils thoroughly enjoying their time in school. Moral and social development are particularly strong and foster both excellent behaviour and attitudes to school and work. Pupils develop well as independent learners because, from the youngest age, they are encouraged to make choices and judgements about their own learning. The combination of excellent attitudes to learning and good progress, mean that pupils are well prepared for their future schooling and life beyond education.

Achievement is good and by the end of Year 6 pupils reach broadly average standards. Pupils enter Year 1 with skills and abilities that are below average. Standards at the end of Year 2 have been below average, but the current picture is that they are broadly average. Most classes have a larger than usual proportion of pupils who have extra learning needs and all groups of pupils make good progress. Girls' attainment has been higher than that of boys in previous years and the school has recognised this and is providing activities that are particularly designed to appeal to both boys and girls. As a result, current data show that, while girls continue to do well, boys are improving and the gap narrowing, particularly in Year 6. Progress in reading and writing is quicker than mathematics because of the enhanced literacy provision; consequently, standards in the current Year 6 are average in English and below average in mathematics.

The school provides a good education. Pupils learn well because the teaching is good and the effective curriculum provides plenty of opportunities for them to use their basic skills and develop wider competencies in art and Spanish, for example. The large proportion of pupils with extra learning needs are supported particularly well within school and through the effective partnerships with outside agencies, so that they benefit equally from all the school has to offer. Pastoral care is excellent and provides pupils with the secure and safe environment that helps them flourish. Pupils in the care of the local authority benefit particularly well and, consequently, make good progress in their personal and academic development. Guidance and support are good, but there is room for improvement in developing consistent ways to set individual targets and marking.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides strong leadership and is ably supported by key staff. Good improvement has been apparent since the previous inspection and the school continues to seek ways of enhancing provision and improving pupils' achievement. Governance is good. Systems employed by leaders and managers to evaluate the work of the school are robust.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Outstanding provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that children get off to a flying start and make good progress. The excellence of the induction arrangements and the first-rate teaching and support from all staff enable children to settle quickly. As a result, children join in with great enthusiasm. For example, when playing a parachute game, they did so with sheer exuberance. Children's skills on entry are generally well below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy and personal development. By the time they start Year 1 all children have made good progress towards the early learning goals, although their skills remain below expectations in mathematical skills and literacy. The more able children make very good progress as they work successfully towards their early learning goals. All of this is possible because the energetic and determined Reception teacher provides excellent leadership and management. Personal development is exemplary. The children gain in confidence, use their initiative and show curiosity and interest in all they do. Behaviour is excellent. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified quickly and given excellent additional support. The high-quality and safe areas of learning are exceptionally well planned and resourced. Staff carefully assess and adapt their planning to ensure that the children enjoy a wide range of stimulating activities and opportunities to learn independently.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics.
- Improve the quality of target-setting and marking so that pupils are fully aware of their achievements and what they need to do to improve further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

By the end of Year 2, pupils have made good progress and standards are close to the national average. Results in national tests have often been a little below average and significantly below in some years. By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average. In the current Year 6, standards are broadly average in English and below average in mathematics. Fewer opportunities exist for pupils to use their sound mathematical skills to solve problems and investigate in real-life activities than those which exist to use English skills across other subjects. Challenging targets are being met, and some are being exceeded. The school's effective tracking procedures show that pupils make good progress overall and satisfactory progress in mathematics. A major concern for the school has been standards in writing, particularly for the higher attaining pupils. However, the standard of writing is improving and throughout the school the amount and quality of writing done in other subjects are much improved. Pupils' basic skills and independence improve rapidly because of the way pupils are expected to use them in a wider range of contexts. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those in the PSRP, are making good progress towards their individual targets. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, those learning English as an additional language and the high proportion of pupils cared for by the local authority are also progressing well towards their individual targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are self-assured, display positive attitudes to learning and generally work hard. Spiritual development is good and leads to pupils who are reflective and thankful for the opportunities they receive. Pupils know about aspects of other cultures and their cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils flourish in the secure and supportive environment and enjoy all that the school has to offer. From their earliest days in the Reception class, positive relationships are fostered. Pupils feel safe, show great enjoyment and respond positively to the many opportunities offered to them. Pupils have good knowledge and understanding of the importance of leading healthy and safe lifestyles. They know that regular exercise and a healthy diet are very important. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community. The school council represents the interests of the children well; it raises much needed funds for charities, including its support for the local hospice. Older pupils take on their responsibilities with enthusiasm, for example, the role of indoor 'playleaders' where they support younger pupils. Pupils develop good basic skills, including the development of strong information and communication technology (ICT) skills that prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils and parents speak warmly about the teachers and the effective work they do. They rightly recognise that the good teaching leads to good progress in learning throughout the school. Pupils learn best when learning goals are clear and challenging. The main strengths in teaching are: the good management of behaviour so that learning is rapid and enjoyable; the extensive use of rewards and praise that promotes a positive learning environment; good planning that caters for all the various needs; and the increasing use of ICT facilities to track pupils' progress, illustrate teaching points, challenge pupils' understanding and provide a resource for gathering information. Overall, the quality of target-setting and marking lacks consistency; consequently, pupils are not as clear as they might be about how well they are doing and what they need to do next. Pupils with extra learning needs are well supported and they make good progress. In the PSRP, pupils with a very wide range of complex learning needs are catered for exceptionally well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum promotes academic and personal development well. Good attention is paid to developing basic literacy and ICT skills. Throughout the school, pupils are responding positively to recent initiatives to raise standards; for example, new writing programmes are having a significant impact. The school has correctly identified the need to review curriculum planning, so that there are more links between subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from particularly good support and, consequently, these pupils are confident in their learning and achieve well. Able, gifted and talented pupils are also supported well and make good progress. Sensitively devised support ensures those pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress. Pupils value very highly the many excellent enrichment activities on offer, thoroughly enjoying the many visits, visitors in school and out-of-school

clubs. There is a strong emphasis on sport, the creative arts and learning a modern foreign language, including the older pupils having an opportunity to learn Spanish.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall. Pupils are exceptionally well cared for and relationships are very good. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure and say that 'adults always listen and help if you have a problem'. Behaviour and attendance are monitored extremely closely; consequently, inappropriate behaviour is very rare and pupils have absolute confidence that, if it were to occur, it would be promptly and effectively sorted out. Child protection and other checks to safeguard pupils' health and safety meet national requirements. All pupils are fully included in all the school offers. Support is excellent for vulnerable pupils, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those for whom English is an additional language, and the children with many needs in the PSRP. Systems for tracking pupils' academic progress are good. However, marking and target-setting are inconsistent across the school. As a result, pupils are not always fully aware of achievements and what they need to do to improve their work further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher leads and manages well and is particularly successful in motivating, guiding and enthusing staff. Her effective leadership has fostered good improvement, particularly the standards in writing and the way that basic literacy and ICT skills are better used and developed in the full range of subjects. Challenging targets are routinely set in all these areas. School self-evaluation is accurate and increasingly rigorous. Moreover, improvement planning identifies the most appropriate priorities. Consequently, the school has a good capacity for further improvement. The monitoring of teaching and learning is effective, often through watching lessons and scrutinising pupils' work. Nevertheless, lesson observations focus too much on teachers' performance and not enough on what pupils are learning. The school promotes community cohesion well. Links with the local community are very strong, including productive partnerships with the church, after-school club and the home for elderly citizens. Globally, pupils benefit from links with an Australian school in Darwin. Pupils are expected to respect all minority groups and there are regular visits from leaders of groups, such as a local imam. Discrimination is not tolerated and the promotion of equal opportunities is exemplary. Governance is effective with a good mix of support and challenge. A great emphasis is placed on receiving the widest range of information, such as reports from staff, visits by governors and reports and data, where appropriate. Financial management is prudent and the school has earmarked surplus funds for building priorities.

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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?	1
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?	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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	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?	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	1
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**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Cuthbert's Church of England Primary School, Blackburn with Darwen, BB3 0HY

On behalf of the inspection team, may I say that we thoroughly enjoyed our inspection of your good school recently. We noted, and appreciated very much, the warm welcome, courtesy and help that you gave us. It is not possible in this short letter to write down everything that we saw, but here are some of the main findings.

What we really liked about your school:

- the recent improvements in writing standards
- the excellent provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the good progress that you make in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2
- the good support for pupils with extra learning needs and the good progress they make
- the particularly strong moral and social development that leads to your excellent behaviour and very good attitudes to school and work
- the excellent range of activities that enrich your academic and personal development, including the ones before and after school
- the contribution you all make to a safe and caring atmosphere in the school, such as the way older pupils help the less confident in the playground and elsewhere
- the exceptionally strong way the school ensures that everyone is treated the same
- the good leadership of your headteacher.

All schools can improve, so I have asked the school to make sure that you learn more quickly in mathematics. The school also needs to improve the link between your learning targets and the marking of your work, so that you are clear about how well you are doing and what else you need to do to improve further. We are certain that you will want to be very helpful by continuing to work hard, always doing your best and following the guidance from your teachers.

Good luck and best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

John Heap

Lead inspector