

Ribbleton Avenue Methodist Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119354
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	339418
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Sonya Williamson HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	190
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Peter Sheasby
Headteacher	Mrs J Alexander-Steele
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, representatives from the local authority and groups of pupils. Learning was observed for 55% of inspection time and seven teachers were observed teaching. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at information about pupils' attendance, attainment and progress, work in pupils' books, monitoring and evaluation and improvement planning documents, staff and pupils' questionnaires and 28 questionnaires received from parents and carers.

- how well all pupils, and particularly higher attaining pupils, are challenged and supported to make the best possible progress from their starting points
- whether improvements to assessment and tracking systems are strengthening teaching and learning and enabling increasing proportions of pupils to meet their learning targets
- how effectively staff new to the school are inducted
- how well the curriculum is adapted to meet pupils' individual needs and interests and to help them enjoy their learning
- the rigour and accuracy of self-evaluation and how well it informs improvement planning.

Information about the school

This is a broadly average-sized primary school. The proportions of pupils who are eligible for free school meals, are from minority ethnic backgrounds, do not speak English as an additional language and have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are all more than double national average figures. Very few pupils are at the early stages of learning English. A breakfast club on the school site is managed by the school. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools award. The school has undergone a period of significant changes in staffing at all levels since the previous inspection and the current headteacher took up her permanent position on 1 January 2010.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the attainment and achievement of pupils, in their attendance and in the extent to which they develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being.

Ribbleton Avenue Methodist Junior School is a warm and welcoming environment. Parents and carers are supportive of the school and value the increasing opportunities for them to engage with staff, particularly when their children are experiencing personal difficulties. The very large majority of pupils say they enjoy school and feel safe there. The pastoral care and support for vulnerable pupils is strong.

Pupils and staff recognise the positive difference that the new headteacher is making to the school now. They also acknowledge her contribution to the improvements made during her time as part-time associate headteacher. Staff, new to the school this term, have settled quickly into school routines.

The quality of teaching and the pace of learning overall have improved well during the last year. More pupils are on track to achieve their challenging targets, although the standards they reach are well below those expected nationally. Pupils' learning is satisfactory. However, their rates of progress are not yet sufficiently rapid and secure enough to compensate for slow progress in the past, during periods when teaching was weaker than it is now. Attendance is well below the national average which is contributing to pupils' poor achievement.

Low attendance and poor punctuality, pupils' low standards and limited opportunities within the curriculum for pupils to apply their basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), all combine to limit the extent to which pupils develop those workplace and other skills that will effectively contribute to their future economic well-being.

The school has satisfactory capacity to improve further. The headteacher already knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and is rigorously addressing the main priorities for improvement. The headteacher and equally committed deputy headteacher continue to build on existing successes such as the rapid improvements to behaviour and the more rigorous tracking of pupils' achievement. There are newly emerging strengths in teaching such as the consistent application of behaviour management strategies. However, the levels of challenge for pupils and the match of learning

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activities and resources to pupils' needs are not yet sufficiently well linked to assessment information to enable pupils to achieve in line with their capabilities.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attendance to at least the national average by increasing the rigour with which systems for promoting good attendance and monitoring absence are applied.
- Raise pupils' attainment, particularly in English, mathematics and science by accelerating, securing and monitoring rates of pupils' progress throughout the year and from one class to the next.
- Strengthen teaching by ensuring that teachers make more effective use of assessment information to match tasks to pupils' needs and ensure that challenge is appropriate, particularly for higher attaining pupils.
- Improve pupils' punctuality and develop better opportunities for pupils to apply their basic skills across all areas of learning, in order to enhance their future economic well-being.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

In 2009, the Year 6 pupils' standards in national tests were well below average and progress was too slow, particularly for higher attaining pupils. Currently, work in pupils' books, discussions with pupils, observations of teaching and learning and analysis of assessment information, show that pupils now make satisfactory progress. However, this is not sufficient to close gaps in their prior learning. Lower attaining pupils make better progress than higher attaining pupils. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities respond well to the good support provided by teaching assistants who know the pupils very well. Higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged by the tasks set, although teachers are beginning to set different and more appropriate work for these pupils in an increasing proportion of lessons. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds have similar levels of achievements..

Although pupils' achievement is inadequate partly as a result of insufficient priority being given to its promotion, pupils enjoy their learning. They are keen to talk about what they have learned, particularly when their learning is more active, such as in themed weeks, is well linked to their learning targets or when they have made a breakthrough in learning. In one successful, well-structured mathematics lesson a pupil celebrated his understanding of long division with 'Miss, I get it now!' and then rushed off to complete further examples to show what he could do.

Attendance is very low with a high proportion of pupils who are persistently absent and some pupils' absence linked to parents and carers taking pupils for extended holidays abroad. Although a few pupils, parents and staff have some concerns about pupils' behaviour and the way that it is managed, inspectors found behaviour to be satisfactory overall. In the classroom, good behaviour is promoted well through the use of clear expectations and appropriate praise. Any poor behaviour is generally managed well as a result of good in-class support and therefore has very little negative impact on the

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quality of learning. Pupils behave well and safely when moving around the school. Pupils report that instances of bullying and name calling are dealt with quickly and well. They recognise, and are pleased with, recent improvements in behaviour.

Pupils of all backgrounds get on well together and play happily and energetically in the playground, which they have contributed to improving. They have a good sense of right and wrong and their spiritual development is growing in response to more opportunities for reflection being created. Pupils adopt and understand healthy lifestyles very well. The take-up of school meals is well above the national average and staff have pertinent discussions with pupils whose packed lunches appear less than healthy so that pupils' understanding of an appropriately balanced diet is developing well.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory and almost all unsatisfactory teaching that had been identified by leaders and managers in the previous year, has been eradicated. An intensive programme to develop teachers' skills is continuing to enhance practice, although its impact is limited by changes to staffing and insufficiently close monitoring of planning.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Teachers are effective classroom managers and liaise well with support staff, for example, in checking whether pupils understand what they have to do and in recording team points for good behaviour. Teachers structure their lessons well, sharing learning objectives with pupils and ensuring smooth transitions between activities so that learning time is maximised. In the most effective lessons, pupils are set appropriate next steps in learning or behavioural targets and teachers frequently reinforce their high expectations of pupils. Marking is up to date and the best uses questions well to encourage pupils to achieve their next steps in learning. However, pupils' attention is often not drawn to errors and they are not given time to make suggested improvements.

Senior leaders have established good systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress. Teachers are beginning to increase the range of strategies they use to make checks on pupils' learning. Nevertheless, the use of assessment information to match learning to pupils' needs and to address potential underachievement is not yet sufficiently well established. Questions are not frequently targeted at particular pupils to probe and extend their learning. Too often, all pupils in the class have the same learning objectives and tasks and resources are not appropriate to meet their needs.

The curriculum meets requirements. There is a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities provided at both lunchtimes and after school so that pupils with after-school commitments are not excluded. Participation rates are high and pupils value the activities. The curriculum is enhanced by intervention strategies for pupils at risk of underachievement and by the 'nurture group' that provides good support for vulnerable pupils. The curriculum does not provide many enough opportunities to make links between areas of learning or to provide opportunities for pupils to practise their basic skills in a range of contexts. Teachers have not sufficiently personalised the curriculum to match the experiences and interests of Ribbleton pupils.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Links with the neighbouring infant school enable successful transition. There are strong systems in place for pastoral support, particularly for vulnerable pupils. This work is enhanced by the efforts of support staff, mentors and a range of partners. The breakfast club ensures that pupils have a good start to their school day.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

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The new headteacher has an ambitious vision for the school. Despite changes to staffing she has engendered a positive ethos and a collegiate approach to improvement. There are clear signs that the vision is beginning to be realised, although, as yet the improvements made to arrest the decline in pupils' achievement have had insufficient time to show a sustained and secure impact. Value for money is, therefore, inadequate. Teaching and behaviour show clear improvement. The pace of learning has quickened in response to the better use of challenging targets. The headteacher and the senior leadership team have chosen appropriate priorities to take the school forward. They work effectively with advisers and consultants from the local authority, particularly to enhance the capacity for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and the professional development of staff, whilst a permanent and secure staff team is being established.

Governors have realised that they must challenge the school as well as support it. They have made appropriate changes to their practice such as strengthening recruitment strategies, streamlining committees and changing the timings of meetings so that more governors can attend. Most significantly they have developed their understanding of achievement data and become regular visitors to school, even taking part in the scrutiny of pupils' work. Governors have ensured that safeguarding systems are effective. They have recently developed a policy and action plan to develop the currently satisfactory promotion of community cohesion further within the school, and to build upon the existing harmonious multi-cultural climate so that pupils understand more about communities further away. The school promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination satisfactorily.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

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Views of parents and carers

In completed questionnaires the very large majority of parents and carers agreed that their child enjoyed school, was safe, making enough progress and was encouraged to lead a healthy lifestyle. They were equally positive about how well they were kept informed and the effectiveness of leadership and management. Inspectors agree with parents that all these aspects are at least satisfactory although the low levels of attainment and satisfactory progress mean that pupils' achievement is inadequate overall. Several comments received referred to the instability of staffing and its impact on the school's effectiveness. Inspectors agree with some of these comments but have found that the new headteacher is having a positive impact on the school. A very small number of comments referred to concerns about behaviour and safety. Inspectors found behaviour and the encouragement of safe practices to be satisfactory and the headteacher responsive to any concerns expressed by parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ribbleton Avenue Methodist Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 28 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 190 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	10	36	16	57	1	4	1	4
The school keeps my child safe	7	25	18	64	1	4	2	7
The school informs me about my child's progress	6	21	19	68	3	11	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	7	25	17	61	2	7	1	4
The teaching is good at this school	6	21	18	64	3	11	1	4
The school helps me to support my child's learning	7	25	15	54	4	14	2	7
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	3	11	21	75	2	7	2	7
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	1	4	21	75	3	11	2	7
The school meets my child's particular needs	2	7	21	75	4	14	1	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	29	14	50	3	11	2	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	4	14	17	61	4	14	1	4
The school is led and managed effectively	6	21	17	61	2	7	2	7
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	8	29	16	57	3	11	1	4

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



Dear Pupils

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when the inspectors visited your school recently. You helped by completing questionnaires and giving up your time to speak with us. Your frequent smiling showed us how much you enjoy school. When you talked to inspectors you were confident, mature and thoughtful. You know how to be healthy through sensible eating and taking lots of physical activity. Well done! We were also glad to hear how you enjoy helping each other.

Although we found that most aspects of your school are satisfactory, some important areas were not good enough and so we have judged that your school needs a notice to improve. This means your school will have a visit from another inspector quite soon to check that things are improving. The standards you reach are lower than those found in most schools and your attendance is very low. Your learning and progress are satisfactory, but they are not as good as they should be. You told us that there has been improvement since your new headteacher came to the school and we agree.

We have asked all the staff and governors to :

- encourage you to attend better and check up on you more closely when you are not at school
- help you to reach higher standards by checking that you all progress as well as you should in your learning throughout the year and in all classes
- strengthen teaching by making sure that teachers make better use of the information they have about your learning to match the tasks they set you more closely to your needs
- make sure that those of you who learn quickly are challenged even more
- encourage you to be more punctual
- give you better opportunities to use your basic skills across all subjects to help you prepare for the future.

You can all help by coming to school regularly and on time, by continuing to behave well, by always trying to do your best and by letting teachers know if the work is too easy for you.

Yours sincerely

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