

Westhead Lathom St James' Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119377
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	339425
Inspection dates	11–12 January 2010
Reporting inspector	David Halford

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	72
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Lyn Jackson
Headteacher	Mrs Alison Albion
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2007
School address	School Lane Westhead Ormskirk L40 6HL
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eight lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' work, improvement planning, a range of policy documents, nationally published assessment data and the school's own data and 60 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the standards pupils attain in numeracy and literacy
- how effectively the school promotes the personal development and welfare of the pupils
- the effectiveness of curricular provision in classes which accommodate pupils with a wide range of ages and ability.

Information about the school

This small school is situated near the market town of Ormskirk. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes. The proportion of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average, although the number with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is well below average. Almost all pupils are of White British background; a small number are from a minority ethnic background. All speak English as their home language. The Early Years Foundation Stage provides for children in the Reception Year who are taught together with Year 1 pupils. The school holds the Activemark, Healthy Schools Award, the Race Equality Charter and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) International Award.

Parents can pay for their children to attend a breakfast club and/or for the extended after-school care provision. This extended provision will be inspected separately and the outcomes will be available in a separate report.

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school which cares for its pupils exceptionally well. Central to its success is the detailed knowledge and understanding the staff have of the individual needs of each pupil and the contribution made to the pupils' personal development. Pupils are well aware of this and respond with excellent behaviour and very positive attitudes to each other, to staff and to pupils. Outstanding leadership and governance are promoting high quality outcomes for pupils. The school is regarded highly by parents and its local community. A very large response to the parents' questionnaire was overwhelmingly positive and contained comments such as, 'The school is exceptionally supportive of pupils and parents, always putting the child's needs at the centre of its work.', and "The school provides my children with everything they need and more!"

From starting points which are broadly average, but vary widely because of the small numbers of pupils in each year group, almost all pupils make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage. Good progress is maintained through Key Stages 1 and 2, including those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, with most pupils attaining above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. The school has a detailed system for tracking the individual progress of each pupil. Recent concentration on improving the quality of pupils' writing has had a positive impact and standards in writing are on a rising trend. Teachers' marking ensures that pupils are very clear about how to improve their written work. This is not the case with mathematics, where marking is not so detailed and informative for pupils and improvement in pupils' standards is not so clear.

Teaching is consistently good and, because each of the three classes contains a wide range of pupils of different ages and ability, tasks are matched carefully to the individual needs of pupils. Lessons are followed up well with practical experiences where possible. For example, during the inspection the two classes containing the older pupils were engaged in work which made effective links between the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in the context of project work on the Tudors. Costumes, the construction of nosegays and plague charms engaged pupils very effectively.

Curricular provision is good and managed effectively on a four-year cycle to accommodate mixed-age classes. The school has recently embarked upon an ambitious initiative to promote pupils' research skills and independent learning, as well as their subject knowledge, through its curricular provision. This is at an early stage of development and requires further work to be embedded fully in the school's provision.

The leadership of the school is very strong. The headteacher, staff and governors have a very clear and accurate overview of the school and a purposeful desire for further

development. They are very aware of the school's strengths and areas for development and this is reflected in accurate self-evaluation. The school is well placed to promote further improvement and demonstrates a good capacity to do so. It provides good value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve pupils' standards in mathematics by:
 - identifying clearly what pupils need to do next to improve their work.
- Consolidate recent developments in curricular provision to improve pupils' research skills and independent learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Published data need to be treated with some caution in reaching conclusions about pupils' outcomes, since year groups in this school contain relatively small numbers of children. Nevertheless, over the last three years national data indicate that pupils' overall standards by the end of Year 6 have been above average in English, mathematics and science. Evidence collected from classroom observations also indicates that standards are above average and that pupils are challenged well and enjoy their learning. In a good literacy lesson for older pupils, their good speaking and listening skills were employed in work on King Lear and his daughters. Lower junior children wrote well about Tudor costumes. They met very clear targets for improvement and produced writing of a good standard. Pupils' past work also demonstrates above average standards. Overall, pupils' achievement is good in all basic skills, and particularly so in writing, which has been a recent focus for development. The trend of improvement is currently slower in mathematics than in writing. Detailed and good quality support offered to pupils with special educational needs and/or learning disabilities enables them to make good progress in relation to their prior attainment and they achieve well.

Many aspects of pupils' personal development are promoted particularly well by the outstanding quality of care provided by the school. Pupils have a highly developed knowledge of how to keep healthy. Behaviour in lessons, in the playground and around the school is exemplary. Pupils really enjoy their work and respond very well to each other and to all the adults with whom they interact. Pupils clearly feel particularly safe and say that the adults always help them to do their best work. Attendance is good. Pupils support each other, the school and the local community very well. Pupils act as playground helpers, and all pupils are happy in school and are helped to adopt a very positive attitude to their lessons. They clearly enjoy taking on areas of responsibility and respond very well to it. However, their independence in assessing their own and the quality of their classmates' work is less well developed. Pupils have an excellent knowledge of right and wrong and the school takes every opportunity to promote their self-esteem. They have an encouragingly broad understanding of other cultures.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good and is promoting effective learning. Lessons are planned well and work is matched carefully to the needs of individual pupils. Pupils of all ages show keen interest in lessons. Teaching assistants are always well informed, know the pupils' needs well and are confident and efficient in their work. Classrooms are not very spacious and pupils are managed well in rather cramped conditions. Individual assessments of pupils' progress are undertaken frequently and regularly, and detailed information recorded. This informs planning well and leads to lessons that meet the needs of different groups of pupils effectively. Pupils are well informed about their progress and how to improve it through the use of informative marking and dialogue with adults. Currently, this provision is more effective in the development of pupils' writing than in mathematics. A clear focus to learning, high quality questions, sustained pace through the lesson and good links between subjects, are all features of the good quality teaching.

Curricular provision is good. It operates on a four-year cycle thus ensuring that pupils accommodated in classes containing mixed age groups, which may vary from year to year, are provided with a curriculum which is free from omission or repetition. It is adjusted effectively to meet the wide range of pupils' needs. Cross-curricular themes are central to this provision. The school has recently started to examine critically the development of pupils' research skills and encourage more independent learning, in

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

addition to providing good subject coverage. This work is currently at an early stage of development and needs further consolidation. A good range of extra-curricular opportunities, which are well supported and enjoyed by the pupils and include residential experience for older pupils, enriches the curriculum.

The care, support and personal guidance pupils receive are outstanding. Support staff, including those employed by external agencies working in partnership with the school, make a particularly strong contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils know that the adults care for them and understand their needs. They respond particularly well to this provision. This support enables all pupils, including the most vulnerable, to be fully involved in school life and to make good progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership of this small school is outstanding and contributes substantially to the significant improvement which has been made since the last inspection. All the staff, in whatever role they occupy, are part of a coherent team approach in which all are strongly committed to promoting improvement. The staff questionnaires returned indicated that all staff were very proud to be part of the school. Good quality improvement planning is presented clearly. Teaching and learning are monitored effectively.

Governors are knowledgeable, experienced and challenging. They support the school extremely well and have an outstanding knowledge of its strengths and areas for development. They speak cogently about what needs to be done. Staff and governors take their responsibility for safeguarding the pupils very seriously and are well aware of the good processes and procedures which are in place. The school's provision for the promotion of equal opportunities is good, largely due to the detailed knowledge each member of staff has about the pupils in their care. The school promotes and evaluates its work in community cohesion well. It has established links with other schools locally and nationally. It knows the local community it serves well. The school's procedures for tackling any form of discrimination are effective.

The school enjoys very strong links with parents, carers and other outside agencies and there are effective communication links between school and home, which include a new 'texting' procedure which many parents appreciate greatly. The high quality of this partnership has contributed significantly to the outstanding quality of care and personal

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

development of the pupils, which is central to the school's success and upon which it is building its further improvement.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

A very high percentage of parents and carers returned the questionnaires distributed prior to the inspection. Several questionnaires included comments which were highly positive and affirming of the work of the school. They illustrate well the high quality of the relationship which exists between the school and its pupils, parents and carers. A very small minority had some misgivings about the work of the school, but the overwhelming majority confirms the inspectors' positive judgments.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Westhead Lathom St James' Church of England Primary 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 60 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 72 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	73	15	25	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	51	85	8	13	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	46	77	14	23	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	63	21	35	0	0	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	43	72	16	27	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	42	70	18	30	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	70	17	28	0	0	0	0
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)	41	68	17	28	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	42	70	17	28	0	0	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	43	72	17	28	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	72	17	28	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	47	78	13	22	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	50	83	9	15	1	2	0	0

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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.



13 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Westhead Lathom St James' Church of England Primary School, Ormskirk
L40 6HL

My colleague and I really enjoyed our recent inspection of your school. Thank you very much for your warm welcome and for looking after us so well. You were very helpful in lessons when I asked you to explain what you were doing and also very friendly around the school. My particular thanks should go to everyone who spoke with me and who helped me to understand why it is that you enjoy your school so much.

Westhead Lathom St James Primary School is a good school, with some very exciting work taking place. The staff care for you all particularly well, make sure you feel safe and secure and I think that the way your headteacher and her staff and governors manage your school is also outstanding. I shall remember your interesting work about the Tudors, the older children's work on King Lear and searching for multi-link cubes in the snow with the Reception children. I also looked at the DVD of your 'Oliver' production! That looked really enjoyable!

When we visit schools, inspectors also look for things which will help each school to get even better. I think that the way your writing is marked is very helpful to you, and it would be good for this to happen in mathematics. This will help you to raise your standards even more in this subject. I also think it would be helpful if your teachers could do some more work on developing the interesting way the subjects you study are used to develop your skills and help your independence. I have asked your headteacher to make these important improvements.

Thank you once again for all your help. I send you all my very best wishes for the future. I do hope that you continue to enjoy learning as much as you do at the moment.

Yours sincerely

Mr David Halford

Lead inspector

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