

Higher Walton Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119393
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	339429
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Jon Lovgreen

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	91
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Dian Holme
Headteacher	Mrs Joy Headley
Date of previous school inspection	5 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eight lessons, spending four hours observing work in the classroom and seeing all teachers teach. They held meetings with governors, staff, and various groups of pupils. A scrutiny of some Key Stage 2 pupils' work in their English, mathematics, history, geography and science books also took place. Inspectors looked at monitoring and planning documents, minutes of governing body meetings and reviews by the local authority. The school's data on pupil progress was analysed in detail. Questionnaires returned by pupils, staff and 51 parents were also scrutinised.

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

- pupils' progress in English, particularly in writing
- the quality of teaching and learning in mixed-age classes and the provision for higher attainers and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- whether work in the Early Years Foundation Stage is a strength of the school
- how effectively the school has tackled the issue of widening pupils' experience and understanding of other cultures
- the quality of subject leadership across the school.

Information about the school

Higher Walton Church of England Primary is a small school serving a village and nearby communities. All four classes combine pupils from two year groups. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is very low and no pupil is at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. Very few pupils are eligible for a free school meal. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, whilst the proportion with a statement of special educational needs matches the national average. Recent awards include Healthy Schools Flagship Status, Activemark, Artsmark Silver, and Eco Schools (bronze). During the past year the governing body has had considerable changes of personnel and three vacancies remained at the time of the inspection.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Higher Walton is a good school with a deservedly strong reputation locally. Good use is made of its small size, combined-age classes, and effective links with families to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Within this, pupils thrive. All are happy and positive about school; most become mature and confident both in their work and their relationships with each other. Pupils' ideas and creativity are celebrated, as seen in the extensive art work on display and the way in which pupils are encouraged, and able, to discuss things. Standards are rising in both key stages, more strongly so in Key Stage 1. Pupils are achieving well in most subject areas across the school. The rate of progress they make in writing in Key Stage 2 is more limited. Teachers are sometimes not clear enough when setting tasks about the specific language skills to focus on, and marking is not always precise enough about how to improve.

Since the last inspection the school has made good progress in four important areas of its work. Teaching has improved, the more able pupils are making better progress, and standards in mathematics have risen notably. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. In this highly stimulating and orderly area children soon learn the value of routines, sharing and working together. Excellent relationships and inspirational ideas for work, coupled with a strong focus on spoken language, are at the core of the success achieved here.

The headteacher sets a standard of diligence and commitment for the school. Self-evaluation is exemplary in the level of detail and expectation it includes. This, allied to the shared ambition to do better and a clear understanding of what needs to change to improve, gives the school good capacity to develop further. As subject leadership is increasingly delegated to teachers, they too are learning how to check the quality of the work taking place. At present, some have a tendency to concentrate on checking details rather than drawing back to see broader messages and issues. There have been major changes in the composition of the governing body. Nevertheless, good work has been done on managing the budget, updating policies and resource decisions. Governors are aware of the need to focus more on educational matters.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils make more steady progress in writing skills during Key Stage 2 by:
 - making the purpose of a written task clearer to pupils and guiding them in how to best show their skills in doing it

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- marking that shows pupils where they have succeeded and exactly how to improve their work
- using writing opportunities in subjects other than English to improve pupils' ability to apply written literacy skills in a range of styles.
- Improve the consistency of subject leadership by:
 - increasing leaders' awareness of how to monitor pupils' standards and evaluate their progress
 - improving the systems for checking that curriculum plans ensure clear links and continuity as pupils move up the school
 - making governors more aware of, and engaged in, the school's educational agenda.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils' good attitudes to school are evident in their consistently good attendance and their very positive approach to work. Smiling, happy faces and keenness to get on with work are the norm in the classroom. Behaviour is good. Pupils appreciate the value of routines and use them well. This helps them to be organised, careful and thoughtful in their work. They listen closely to teachers, and each other, so that class discussion becomes an opportunity to find out and explore rather than just an answering questions session. The neatness of much work does credit to pupils and staff alike, although some older pupils do not transfer their care in handwriting exercises into general written work. However, all show a willingness to write at length. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Teachers are alert to the need to amend tasks for them and offer additional support. Skilled and hardworking teaching assistants probe pupils' ideas with them so that they have a good idea of what they want to say and do and how best to tackle things. All pupils value healthy activity. They are keen to be involved in bat and ball games at lunchtime and are enthusiastic in physical education sessions.

Children join Reception with below average skills. Results achieved by the end of Key Stage 1 and 2 are rising. By the end of Year 6 pupils are reaching average standards in all areas of their work. The school sets targets which are beyond those expected and has met or exceeded them in each of the past two years. Close attention to pupils' potential and better understanding of the skills needed to gain the higher levels, have seen the more-able pupils doing better. They, too, make good progress.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is now better matched to the range of ability in each class because teachers have a clearer idea of pupils' academic standards and keep a close eye on their progress. Lesson objectives are clear. Relationships are particularly good: well modelled by adults and responded to by pupils, who work happily and productively in pairs and groups. Teachers make good use of questioning and pupils learn to justify ideas, for instance, which method is best to solve a problem. Lessons are well planned and presented with enthusiasm. Pupils come to expect interesting things to do and are not disappointed. A climate change topic used real-life experiences from across the world to get pupils thinking about differing lifestyles and empathising with people who had suffered. This extends into written work where pupils respond well to the chance to create stories, accounts and reports. Some older pupils would benefit from more guidance about what language skills to concentrate on to be successful in a written task and from tighter advice in marking about what to focus on next. Nonetheless, marking is regular and helpful.

The curriculum benefits from the way in which teachers try to make subjects come alive. Articles lent by museums to the school help make topics like Tudor life and the Egyptians vivid. Themes and theme weeks enable pupils to see links between subjects and apply skills learnt in one area to another. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and pupils get the chance to air their views and to suggest how to improve it. Good use is made of links and partnerships so that pupils get the chance to learn to play music and to get involved in gymnastics, street dance and athletics. Such activities are supplemented by many extra-curricular opportunities: from a cookery club involving

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families to cheerleading, dodge ball, and master classes in art and drama. The Friday 'wake and shake' routine involves the whole school and some family members in energetic fun, and as such is a good example of what the school is all about.

Pupils say they feel safe and very well cared for in school. They appreciate that teachers and other adults in school will 'listen and always understand' in their efforts to help. They are totally confident that problems can be resolved and learn that they have the key role in this. As one pupil explained, 'We learn to mature.' Detailed reports and regular newsletters keep families well informed about pupils' progress and school goings-on. There are good links with specialist agencies although the school follows its own initiative where this is felt to be in the best interests of the pupil. Arrangements to help pupils settle quickly into school and to prepare them for the move to secondary school are well thought through. Initiatives such as a course to help parents better understand and support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities typify the school's commitment to pupils and families alike.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Despite considerable changes in teaching, support and governing body personnel the school has stayed on its course to improvement. The headteacher's vision for the school and her quiet determination to see it come about has been the key catalyst in this process. Her faith in pupils and staff, alongside clear expectations of both, has enthused and enabled them to be a part of the improvement process. Staff are keen to take on leadership of subject areas. They are working hard at this but with varying effect. Some are quicker to see the implications for the school of data about progress and changes to curriculum plans. However, all show enthusiasm for their changing roles and the capacity to develop them. Lesson quality is regularly and accurately checked and teachers work together to follow up the issues from such checks. There is an active and effective approach to equality of opportunity. The commitment of staff in the school to doing the best for all its pupils is apparent in their willingness to help pupils through difficult times. The governing body is coming through a period of major change. It provides good support and challenge in some aspects of its work and is taking active steps to get to grips with the educational side of school life. Community cohesion is being effectively promoted – an improvement since the last inspection. The school encourages visits by adults from different faiths and cultures and links with schools with

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a more diverse population. Considerable efforts are made to inform parents about, and involve them in, school. Parents appreciate this, although their response to offered opportunities is varied. The school has a good partnership with its community. It willingly provides out of hours facilities and acts as a first point of call for information on a range of community and welfare issues. Safeguarding procedures have been reviewed and updated and meet current requirements. Good financial and resource management, coupled with improving standards, show that the school gives good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Recent school improvement planning has seen much time and attention devoted to what happens in the Reception/Year 1 class. A great deal has been achieved and children get off to a flying start to their school careers. Home/school links are strong so that children settle quickly and parents feel well informed and able to raise any concerns. Children join the class with skills below those expected nationally, especially in language, social development and mathematics. Many have not attended Nursery so it is their first experience in a formal setting. The presence of Year 1 role models enables children to quickly pick up expected routines such as working in groups, moving between tasks and tidying up after themselves. Classroom and play areas are colourful and fascinating. Behaviour and attitudes are excellent, motivated by 'star of the day' awards and a behaviour castle chart where children can move towards being crowned a prince or princess, provided they avoid the dungeon! Children are also motivated by the highly imaginative and stimulating things they get to do. Following a theme of dinosaurs,

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children were keen to compare the names, shapes and sizes of different species, make two-dimensional models of their skeletons, and work out relative weights using a balance. The superb focus to spoken language by both teacher and assistants means that children really try hard to get things right when answering questions. They know that an estimate is, 'a sensible guess' and that dinosaurs became, expincted (extinct) when a big ball hit the world'. The outdoor play area is very well organised and used to its full current potential. Assessment is extensive and exceptionally well documented. Leadership is outstanding: energetic, constantly seeking to improve, and rigorous and forward-thinking in its planning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are highly positive about the school and very appreciative of its efforts, as seen in the relatively high return of questionnaires. They particularly like the quality of teaching, the work the school does in encouraging pupils to stay healthy and the way it is receptive to their concerns and ideas. Typical comments noted its, 'Warm and caring atmosphere,' 'Strong family feel' and how, 'very supportive and helpful' it is. Parents also note the progress that the school has made in the past couple of years and the way in which children are encouraged to be fully and creatively involved in school life. A few parents feel that occasional outbursts of misbehaviour need better handling. Inspectors feel that such situations are dealt with well. Pupils, too, have confidence in teachers to tackle any such problems.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Higher Walton 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 51 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 91 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	59	20	39	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	31	61	17	33	2	4	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	30	59	20	39	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	51	23	45	2	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	29	57	22	43	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	53	21	41	2	4	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	63	19	37	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)	26	51	23	45	0	0	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	53	20	39	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	41	22	43	6	12	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	43	27	53	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	57	20	39	2	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	59	21	41	0	0	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.



8 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Higher Walton Church of England Primary School, Preston, PR5 4FE

As you know, we recently came to inspect your school. This letter is to let you know what we found. Firstly, thank you for making us feel so welcome. We were very impressed with how polite and helpful you are, both to visitors and to each other. Our thanks also to those of you who gave up some of your lunchtime to tell us what you thought about school.

We agree with you that yours is a good school. All the staff work hard to care for you so that you are happy and keen to do well. The way you work and play together does you great credit. You willingly help in classrooms and around school. You love the really interesting things that teachers plan for you, both in lessons and in your clubs. As a result you are making good progress in most subjects. Teachers encourage you to work together and share ideas so that you learn to think things through and ask questions. Your written work is neat, but some of you in Key Stage 2 are doing better in mathematics than in English. The way your work is marked in English needs to show you more clearly what you do well and how to improve. Your headteacher keeps a close eye on how well you are doing and other teachers are learning how to organise subjects and check your progress in them. Governors are giving helpful support to the school. Your headteacher, teachers and governors all want the best for you and are looking for ways to improve the school. We have asked them to concentrate on three things: making sure that those of you in Key Stage 2 make better progress in writing; helping teachers who manage subject areas to check more closely how well things are going in them; and getting governors to know and understand more about what goes on in school.

You can help by continuing to work hard and behave well. Do not forget that if part of a lesson seems difficult, you need to work all the harder at it and give it your very best attention. Our best wishes to you for future success and happiness.

Yours sincerely

Jon Lövgreen

Lead inspector

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