

Darwen St Peter's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119458
Local Authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	339445
Inspection dates	7–8 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Mark Williams HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	276
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Holliday Andrew
Headteacher	Mrs Michele Tracey
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2006
School address	Turncroft Road Darwen Lancashire BB3 2BW
Telephone number	01254 701299
Fax number	01254 761873
Email address	michele.tracey@blackburn.gov.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 20 lessons, and held meetings with groups of governors, staff and pupils. Inspectors also met with representatives from the local authority and with parents as they brought their children to school. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including lesson plans, details of pupil assessments, school policy documents and minutes of governor meetings. They also scrutinised the parent questionnaires which were returned.

- how good are outcomes for pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and those with higher abilities?
- the quality of teaching
- how strong are care, guidance and support?
- are leaders demonstrating good capacity for sustained improvement?
- are outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage good?

Information about the school

This is a larger than average size primary school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average for England, while the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is just above. Around 5% of pupils are from Asian heritage backgrounds. The school holds a number of awards including Healthy Schools standards, Activemark, the Football Associations Charter standard, and the ECO Schools Bronze award. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises of two Reception classes.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Darwen St Peter's Church of England Primary School provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. The inspectors' judgement of its effectiveness agrees with the school's own self-evaluation.

There are particular strengths in this school, not least the good quality care, guidance and support which are provided and which reflect the school's strong Christian nature. These good quality features enable pupils to develop mainly positive outcomes in their personal development and ensure those with special educational needs make good progress in their learning. Pupils report they are happy in school and enjoy taking responsibility, particularly in their school and Eco council roles and, for older pupils, as play leaders.

The school has undergone a period of change since the last inspection. The deputy headteacher at that time is now the headteacher. Initially she had much to shoulder in terms of leadership and management responsibility. The establishment of a larger leadership team during the last academic year is ensuring these responsibilities are being shared more equitably. Improvement since the last inspection has been mixed. Good improvement has been made to ensure pupils with special educational needs now make good progress. However, progress in improving writing has been disappointing with very few pupils in last year's Year 6 gaining the higher Level 5 and, for the second year running, no pupil in last year's Year 2 gaining the higher Level 3. Standards overall by the time pupils leave Year 6 remain broadly average representing generally satisfactory progress. Standards in Key Stage 1 were low in 2007 and 2008. There are signs of improvement in 2009 because teaching has been stronger.

The overall quality of teaching in the school is satisfactory as the school correctly evaluates. While the needs of pupils with special educational needs are met in lessons, this is not always the case for higher ability pupils except where teaching is good. A new creative curriculum has been established which shows promising signs. For example, it is gaining the interest of pupils and they are beginning to see how learning in one subject relates to learning in another. Plans for future learning have not yet been fully developed, including how opportunities for writing may be incorporated across subjects. As a result, at this point, the curriculum is judged to be satisfactory rather than good as the school evaluates.

The school evaluated its capacity for sustained improvement to be good; inspectors judge it to be satisfactory and improving. This is because the school has not been able to demonstrate how many of its initiatives and plans have benefited pupils in terms of improved outcomes in their learning and personal development. While it can point to

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some general improvements in pupils' learning, it is difficult to determine whether or not these represent good improvement or not because the school has not made clear what the expected outcomes for pupils would be when targets were set. Leaders, managers and governors have only just begun to quantify what is expected in terms of pupil outcomes as a result of the plans for improvement that are in place. Nonetheless, there are strengths in leadership. Relations with parents are good, as reflected in their mainly positive responses to the inspection questionnaire. Partnerships with external agencies are equally effective and help support pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable well.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards overall and improve rates of progress in writing throughout the school by:
 - ensuring teaching is consistently good or better
 - setting targets for pupils which make clear what the expected outcomes are
 - providing greater levels of challenge for higher ability pupils
 - ensuring the revised curriculum provides strong opportunities for writing across the school.
- Strengthen the school's capacity for sustained improvement by ensuring monitoring and evaluations of its work are rigorously focused on outcomes for pupils.
- About 40% of the school's whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Outcomes for pupils overall are satisfactory. This is because their achievement is satisfactory. Nonetheless, pupils display many positive attitudes and attributes in their personal development and well-being. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and reflects the strong Christian nature of the school. A class assembly led by Year 2 pupils to which parents were invited saw the class cooperate well together and share their excitement about the work on pirates they were undertaking. They spoke confidently and clearly, and their efforts were much appreciated by all in attendance. Pupils' overall enjoyment of school is shown in their attendance, which is above average. Pupils talk confidently about how to stay safe and be healthy. They demonstrate this in good healthy choices at lunchtimes and in their participating in sporting activities and 'wake and shake' sessions. They are confident in the school's ability to care for them. Pupils also enjoy making a positive difference to the life of their school and the wider community. They have done so through the good work of the school and Eco councils. As a result they show a good awareness of the benefits of recycling and have raised money to purchase playground equipment. Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities that benefit others. 'Watchers' (pupils who give out rewards

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for good behaviour in the corridors) and play leaders, for example, contribute to the smooth running of the school. Other opportunities to take on responsibility and also develop enterprise skills include participation in 'Dragon's Den' activities with other schools in the local authority. Such activities, coupled with good skills in using information communication technology help prepare the pupils well for later life.

During the course of the inspection inspectors saw many examples of good behaviour and politeness. They saw very few examples of inappropriate behaviour in a small number of lessons in which the pace of learning was slowed down because of low level chatter or interruptions. In the main, these were handled well but in some cases the interruptions continued.

By the time pupils leave school they attain broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science. However, too few pupils reach the higher levels in writing at the end of both key stages. Nonetheless, there are signs of initial improvement because of interventions the school has put in place in recent times. The overall progress pupils make in their learning from their starting points is satisfactory. This picture is mirrored with pupils currently at the school. Rates of pupil progress in Key Stage 1 improved last year and in some cases were good or better because of stronger teaching. However, there is still some variability in the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1. Also variable, but across the school, is the level of challenge for more able pupils. The school acknowledges this is a weakness.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in their learning, often from very low starting points. This is because their needs are identified early, good quality plans are put into place, which make clear what pupils are to achieve and the quality of support provided by teachers and teaching assistants for this group of pupils is equally good.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3

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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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 Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is satisfactory, as is the use of assessment to support learning. This confirms the school's own evaluation. The best teaching in the school is typified by teachers making clear to pupils what they are to learn and setting appropriate and challenging activities. In addition, in the better lessons, teachers and teaching assistants ask pupils challenging questions which extends their thinking and enables the pupils to work out solutions themselves. An example of this was seen in a class comprising pupils from Years 3 and 4. Here, the teacher set all pupils clear and challenging targets to enable them to identify solid shapes from nets. The higher ability pupils in the class made predictions before cutting out the nets and folding them accordingly to see if they made cubes. They did this successfully and worked well together, happily talking about the mathematics behind their predictions. In such lessons pupils are fully engaged in their learning and progress is often good. In lessons where teaching is more satisfactory the level of challenge for all pupils, particularly the more able, is often less effective. Questions teachers ask do not always extend pupils' thinking. In such lessons low level chatter also slows down the pace of learning. While, in the main, it is handled well, the disruption often continues. In such lessons, the progress pupils make is never better than satisfactory.

The school has adopted a new approach to the curriculum which focuses on developing creativity and breaks away from the more formal approach. This has captured the imagination of the pupils. The new curriculum has been in place since September 2009 and early indications are of promise in that it is providing pupils with learning opportunities that are more relevant and enjoyable. It is also clear that the curriculum is beginning to build better on previous learning. Nonetheless it is too early to judge the impact on raising standards and improving further the outcomes for pupils' personal development. While initial plans are clear, future ones are skeletal and do not, as yet, fully address the school's desire to have personalised learning. Overall, given the newness of this work, inspectors judge the curriculum to be satisfactory at this point rather than good as the school evaluates. However, the range of extra-curricular activities and opportunities for enrichment are of good quality and appreciated greatly by pupils.

A strength of the school is the quality of care, guidance and support it provides, particularly for vulnerable pupils. This is seen in the progress pupils with special

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educational needs and/or disabilities make which has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. All pupils receive good quality support when they move onto high school and strong links exist with the local schools to ensure pupils settle in well. When pupils leave St Peter's the staff's contact does not end. The headteacher, for example, visits the high schools to see how well former pupils are doing. In addition, and when required, the deputy headteacher also supports vulnerable children through this important transitional stage and into high school life. While this aspect of moving on is strong, leaders are currently looking to how the transition from the Reception class to Year 1 may be strengthened. The school has a range of clear policies in place to ensure pupils are protected from harm. Its work with external agencies is good. An activity provided by the school to stimulate pupils and make them ready for learning is the twice weekly 'wake and shake' sessions. In these children, pupils (and parents) and staff have fun together being healthy and alert.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership structure has undergone a period of change over the last twelve months. Prior to this period much of the leadership and management responsibility was carried by the headteacher; now it is more equally shared. This is because a permanent deputy headteacher has been appointed as have other members of staff who now have teaching and learning responsibilities across the whole school. As a result many important actions have been put into place over the last year. Some of these have been effective. Examples include the improvement in rates of progress for pupils with special needs and stronger teaching in Key Stage 1. Successful work has also been undertaken to sharpen other aspects of teaching practice. Despite these successes though, the numbers of pupils gaining the higher levels in writing at the end of Years 2 and 6 remain stubbornly low.

Leaders, managers and governors have a generally accurate view of the school's effectiveness although sometimes it is too positive. This is mainly because the monitoring and evaluation of its effectiveness is not yet rigorously focused on outcomes for pupils. The school's improvement plan for this academic year has begun to address this. Overall, governance is satisfactory. Also satisfactory are the school's procedures for safeguarding pupils which meet government requirements and the effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion. The school is working on plans to help

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pupils understand not just communities far away – which they do well – but also different communities within their own localities.

There are a number of aspects of leadership and management which are good. These include the school's engagement with parents, many of whom are positive about the work of the school. In addition, the school has worked well with external partners to, for example, support vulnerable pupils and help them, on the whole, make better rates of progress than their peers. The school seeks, through all that it does and its ethos and approach, to promote equality of opportunity. It does so effectively as is demonstrated by its work with vulnerable pupils, although it recognises higher ability pupils need to benefit more in classes where teaching is only satisfactory.

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	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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of provision in the Reception classes is good. The classrooms are bright and stimulating and adults work well as a team to ensure that activities are exciting and fun and provide good opportunities for learning and development. As a result children make good progress from a wide range of starting points – some of them very low. They thoroughly enjoy their time learning how to write by drawing chalk circles on the playground, learning how words rhyme by singing the 'silly soup' song and using interesting computer programmes. Staff know the children well and plan activities for them that not only meet needs but are challenging. Relations with parents are good and this was demonstrated during the inspection by a good number having lunch with their children. Outdoor provision for children is limited by space. The school has good plans for improvement which are delayed through factors beyond its control. Nonetheless staff

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make the best use of this space and the wider school grounds. At present the permanent Early Years Foundation Leader is on a period of leave. Current staff, however, are sustaining the good quality provision and ensuring outcomes for children are equally good.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Seventy three inspection questionnaires were returned by parents/carers. The majority of parents are positive about the school. Where responses were less positive they were focused on what was considered to be a lack of information about their child's progress and whether the school takes account of suggestions or concerns. Inspectors judge the information provided by the school about pupils' progress to be helpful. They also judge that this information will be more refined and focused given the recommendations for improvement they have made. Inspectors judge that the questionnaires sent out by the school other than at the time of an inspection, coupled with the regular newsletters detailing the results, and which explain what is planned and why suggestions have or not been adopted, to be clear.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Darwen St Peter's 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 73 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 276 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	84	59	48	34	4	3	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	96	66	44	30	4	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	60	41	62	43	18	12	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	52	36	80	55	10	7	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	66	46	68	47	4	3	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	52	37	74	52	10	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	90	62	52	36	2	1	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)	60	43	64	46	4	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	60	42	72	50	8	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	68	47	60	41	10	7	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	52	36	58	41	24	17	4	3
The school is led and managed effectively	80	55	50	34	10	7	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	84	58	52	36	2	1	2	1

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.



Thank you very much for your welcome when the inspection team visited your school recently. I am writing to you now to tell you about our findings.

We agree with your school that it provides a satisfactory standard of education for you. This means you attain standards in English, mathematics and science which are broadly average and represent satisfactory progress in your learning. For those of you who find work difficult, your progress is good. This is because the adults ensure the work you do is just right to help you move on. This is not always the case for those of you who have higher abilities and we have asked the school to ensure you are always challenged in your work.

Your school cares for, guides and supports you well and we could see this in the attitudes and attributes you displayed. We particularly enjoyed hearing about your work in the school and Eco councils and saw your good work as play leaders. We also saw lots of good behaviour and politeness but we also saw some that was not as good as we know you and school would expect. Please try to stop the quiet chatter that sometimes goes on in lesson while other people are sharing important information. When this happens lessons become disrupted.

We liked the look of your new curriculum and could see you were excited about it, especially you younger pirates! We know your school is doing more work on it and we are sure they will ask for your opinion again. We have asked that they ensure you get some good opportunities to improve your writing through the topics you learn about.

So what else have we asked your school to do? Well, we have asked that leaders, managers and governors should help you to make better progress in writing across the school so that the standards you attain by the time you leave school rise. We can see there have already been some improvements in Key Stage 1. We saw some good teaching across the school. We have asked your leaders to ensure all teaching is good or better. We have also asked that when the school sets you targets it makes very clear what it expects you to achieve. Likewise, when the grown ups check on what's going on in the school they should always have in mind what you are expected to learn and gain in your personal development.

We enjoyed our visit with you and say thank you once again. We wish you well for the future.

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