

Banks St Stephens' CofE School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119384
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	358544
Inspection dates	27–28 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Geoffrey Yates

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	163
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sylvia Berrill
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Kenny
Date of previous school inspection	4 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Fourteen lessons were observed, taught by six teachers. The inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at the tracking of pupils' progress and the school's monitoring, self-evaluation and planning for improvement. The inspectors also analysed 29 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

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

- The degree to which pupils make consistent progress as they move through the school, especially in mathematics and writing.
- How effective is the Early Years Foundation Stage?
- Are teachers making good use of the revised pupils' tracking data?
- How well the school meets pupils' personal needs.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average size primary school in which the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average but rising. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school has gained many awards, including Healthy School status.

There are independently run before- and after-school clubs on the school site. They are not managed by the school and will be the subject of a separate 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

This is a good school. The school's ethos has a clear focus on individual care and making pupils feel valued. This ensures pupils feel safe. The effective leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher ensures that all pupils make good progress so that they attain above average standards from their average starting points by the time they leave Year 6. Pupils behave well, are exceptionally polite and enjoy coming to school as demonstrated by their above average attendance. Parents think highly of the school, with one parent summing up the views of many, 'My child is very happy at school.'

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children start school with skills within the expected range and settle well because of the good attention given to their personal development. They make satisfactory progress and as a result enter Year 1 working within the expected range, though their writing skills are less well developed. Some of the planned activities, however, are not always matched well enough to children's needs and the outdoor curriculum is not embedded well in all areas of learning. In the rest of the school, a well-planned, enjoyable curriculum is a significant factor in ensuring that pupils make good progress. For example, there are good opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in subjects across the curriculum to support learning, and 'theme' days enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding. A decline in pupils' progress in 2009 has been analysed and measures put in place to improve provision. As a result, attainment at the end of Year 6, was above average, with pupils making good progress overall throughout the school. The current picture shows this improvement has been maintained. However, there is some inconsistency in mathematics with regard to pupils being given opportunities to apply their numeracy skills in solving mathematical problems. Teaching is good overall. Where teaching is good, questioning is used well to probe pupils' understanding and marking is of a good quality. In less successful lessons, teachers spend too long introducing topics, questioning in mathematics is not used well and marking is variable.

Assessment procedures and detailed tracking of individuals and all groups of pupils provide an accurate picture of pupils' attainment and progress as they move through the school. The effective use of assessment information has meant the school has been successful in raising standards in writing. The school has a clear picture of its strengths and weaknesses through accurate self-evaluation and tackles areas for improvement effectively. The school's leaders and management responsibilities are distributed well amongst the staff, and all staff are committed to ensuring the school meets the needs of all its pupils. As such, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Build on the improvements made in raising attainment, especially in mathematics by:
 - ensuring that all teaching is consistently good, and that all teachers are skilful in the use of questioning and discussion to advance pupils' learning
 - providing pupils with plenty of challenging opportunities to use and apply their numeracy skills in solving mathematical problems
 - ensuring that assessment information is used effectively in setting individual targets for improvement and marking is consistently good or better.
- Improve the overall quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring that activities are well matched to children's needs, especially in developing early writing skills
 - making effective use of the outside area to support children's learning
 - improving the quality of resources.

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

Pupils start school with skills within the expected range for their age. They achieve well and work at a good pace and enjoy school. For example, they talk with tremendous enthusiasm about the work they are doing about the Victorians and say how sorry they feel about the harsh conditions in the workhouses. They work well with a partner or in a group when asked to do so. Pupils listen carefully to teachers' instructions and behave well in lessons. They know their targets in English but are less confident when asked about what targets they have in order to help them improve further in mathematics. All groups of pupils make good progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the very small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Attainment in English and mathematics has fluctuated slightly over the past three years, but the most recent national test results indicate that standards in English and mathematics are above average. Work seen in lessons and the school's own assessments, confirm that pupils' attainment in the current Year 6 is above average in English and mathematics, with higher attainers achieving well. Whilst the school's focus on developing pupils' writing skills has been successful, it acknowledges that the focus now needs to move on to mathematics to maintain the momentum of continuous improvement. Work in pupils' literacy books and in other subjects offers good examples of good quality creative writing, for example, in relation to the project based on life in Victorian times.

Pupils enjoy school and respond well to the school's strong promotion of their personal development. They make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They have a good awareness of the need to help those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong and this contributes to their good behaviour. Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and they say that they feel safe in school. They delight in assuming responsibility, for example, in taking an active part in reading out information

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as part of the school's Harvest service held in church during the inspection. Charity fund raising is important to the pupils and fund raising initiatives are organised for those in need. Pupils' achievements in information and communication technology are not as high as those in English and mathematics and as such, the extent to which they develop work place skills is satisfactory rather than good.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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	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 good overall. Lessons are mostly well planned to meet the needs of all pupils, and teachers make good use of resources. For example, in an English lesson, the teacher used electronic notebooks very well to develop pupils' knowledge of journalistic writing. Good relationships at all levels ensure that pupils are committed to their learning even when, in satisfactory lessons, there is too much teacher talk and not enough effective questioning. At times, pupils are not given sufficient time to think out their answers or discuss them with a partner. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning through their effective interactions with small groups and individuals. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive well-focused

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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support. Marking is of a good quality in literacy books but less so in other subjects. The school has improved its pupils' tracking system and the information gathered is increasingly being used well to match work to pupils' needs.

The curriculum is good, with a appropriate emphasis placed on pupils' personal development. There is good attention to cross-curricular links, particularly in literacy. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the many clubs, especially those for sport, which contribute well to keeping them fit.

The care, support and guidance pupils receive are strengths of the school. Staff know the pupils very well and are keen to provide any help that is required. There are good induction systems in place to enable pupils to settle into school quickly. Staff are committed to ensuring any vulnerable pupils have the personal support they need and that parents and carers are fully involved. There are effective links with external agencies that provide additional help if required. Attendance is monitored closely and the school is rightly proud of pupils' good attendance. Parents and carers are very positive about the support that they and their children receive.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership and management team provides a clear sense of direction and ensures a strong drive towards improving the school. The headteacher is supported well by the deputy headteacher and other leaders. Together they are determined to raise standards even further. Pupils' progress is tracked systematically and analysed. Targets set are appropriately challenging given the pupils' starting points. There is a clear and well-structured plan of how to tackle the main priorities to improve standards and the quality of teaching. The learning environment is good overall, despite the limitations of an ageing building. Equality of opportunity is promoted well and no form of discrimination is tolerated. The governing body carries out its duties soundly. Governors have established good links with subject leaders but at times they are over reliant on what the headteacher tells them, rather than finding out things for themselves. Leaders and the governing body have ensured that safeguarding procedures follow best practice guidance and are always given a high priority in the school's everyday work. Pupils can articulate well their views on how they can play their part in this all-important area. The school has carefully considered the needs of its community and together with other organisations works well to promote community cohesion both locally and on a wider

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scale. The school provides 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	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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Careful induction programmes enable children to settle quickly and begin learning. Teaching and learning and leadership and management are satisfactory. Welfare and health and safety procedures are of a good quality and the teacher and teaching assistant work well together. They take good care of the children and have already established very good relationships with the new intake. Topics such as 'Water' have really captured the children's imagination, but there are missed opportunities to develop the topic further. The outside area is not consistently planned into all areas of learning. The classroom offers good opportunities for children to develop their skills, but on occasions, activities lack thorough planning to ensure that learning is as good as it could be. For example, there is a writing table, where children are asked to try and write their names but there is no visible guidance to them as to how letters might be formed correctly. Children enjoy playing in the boat and painting outside, especially when staff intervene with ideas for them to try. Children make satisfactory progress and as a result enter Year 1 with skills within the expected range in most areas of their learning but not in writing. Children behave calmly and sensibly and listen attentively during class discussions, despite some being over long. They learn to take responsibility, for example, by carefully putting away the materials they have been using and move confidently around the classroom and designated outdoor area.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

There was a low return rate of questionnaires from parents and carers. However, this may have been influenced by the school having undertaken its own parents and carers questionnaire survey recently. Almost all questionnaires indicate strong support for all aspects of the school's work, confirming inspectors' judgements that this is a good school. A small number of parents and carers had concerns about the amount of information they receive from the school on their children's progress. Inspectors investigated these concerns could find no evidence to support them.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Banks St Stephens' CofE 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 34 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 163 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	74	8	24	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	26	76	7	21	1	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	53	14	41	2	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	68	9	26	2	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	22	65	11	32	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	65	11	32	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	74	9	26	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)	19	56	13	38	0	0	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	65	11	32	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	50	14	41	2	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	59	13	38	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	22	65	10	29	1	3	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	71	9	26	0	0	1	3

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



30 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Banks St Stephens' CofE School, Southport, PR9 8BL

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed meeting you, seeing part of your Harvest Service, some of your work, spending time in lessons and walking around the school. You were very helpful in answering our questions. I felt the group of pupils from Years 5 and 6 that talked to me about their numeracy skills were true ambassadors for Saint Stephen's! We are pleased you like your school. It is a good school. Here are some of the highlights we found.

- You are thoughtful and caring towards one another. You know a lot about how important it is to eat healthily and take regular exercise.
- We are pleased that you feel safe in school. You told us about the way all the adults take such good care of you. We agree, and so do your parents and carers.
- Your teachers encourage you by planning interesting activities in lessons and there are plenty of school trips. You listen to your teachers and try hard to do well.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and the governing body to work together on three things to make the school even better. We want them to:

- make sure that you are given plenty of opportunities to use your number skills in solving mathematical problems
- make the quality of teaching good or better in all your lessons not just most of them
- ensure that good use is consistently made of both the classroom and outside areas in planning exciting well-matched activities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

We are sure you will all help your school to be even better.

Yours sincerely

Mr Geoffrey Yates

Lead inspector

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