

St Stephen's Tockholes CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119459
Local Authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	358559
Inspection dates	7–8 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Marie Cordey

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	49
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Terry Young
Headteacher	Mrs Barbara Cocken
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited four lessons and observed two teachers. The inspector held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including the school's self-evaluation evidence, the school improvement plan and internal and external monitoring reports of the school's work. The inspector analysed 16 questionnaires completed by parents and carers and those completed by pupils and staff.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. She looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well pupils achieve, particularly in writing.
- How effective teaching is in engaging and challenging all pupils in the mixed-age classes.
- How well children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The contribution of leaders and managers to improving pupils' outcomes.

Information about the school

The school is much smaller than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.

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. Pupils thrive on the outstanding care and support they receive and this is reflected in their good behaviour and thoughtful care for others. They grow in confidence because of the excellent support for their welfare; particularly pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school life and their attendance rates are high. Their parents and carers appreciate the respect and value that the school places on their children. Pupils are vigilant ambassadors for adopting healthy lifestyles: they take full advantage of the many sporting opportunities available and enjoy the nutritious, tasty school dinners.

Pupils are eager to learn and good quality teaching helps them to secure above average attainment by the time they leave school at the end of Year 6. Attainment for the more-able pupils is rising because of the school's focus on providing more challenge in lessons, and the high expectations of all staff. Attainment in writing is lower than in reading and mathematics. The school's new, rigorous assessment procedures have identified the key features of pupils' writing which require improvement. The content of pupils' writing is good but is often let down by weaker elements such as incorrect grammar, punctuation or spelling. In the younger classes, opportunities to develop writing are sometimes missed.

Children settle down happily in the Reception class because they receive a warm welcome and are well prepared for school life. Reception children's skills are developed well and they make good progress, although their writing is not as strong as, for example, their reading or number skills.

Leaders have a good understanding and knowledge of their school; they know what the strengths are as well as what they need to do to improve the school's performance. They recognise the need to involve staff and the governing body more in improvement planning. Staff and the governing body are fully committed to supporting school improvement but have not had enough opportunities to be involved at the planning stage so that they can help to measure the effectiveness of the school's actions. The school has maintained pupils' above average attainment, been successful in improving attendance and provides an exciting, varied curriculum that is enjoyed by all pupils. Consequently, the school's capacity to sustain improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment, especially in writing, by:
 - focusing more on improving the quality of pupils' handwriting, the presentation of their work, spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - making optimal use of opportunities to practise writing skills.

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- Improve the quality of school improvement planning by:
 - ensuring that all staff and governors can measure the effectiveness of actions to improve the school's performance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

On entry to Reception, children's skills, vary considerably each year but are mostly broadly typical for their age. Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning when they take part in practical activities and when they are given opportunities to discuss their learning. In one class, pupils were eager to talk to each other about a fairy tale that had stimulated them. They were proud and delighted when they could refine their ideas and explore different options before coming to well-prepared conclusions. When there are fewer opportunities for pupils to be practically involved, their progress slows.

A school focus on raising standards in mathematics has led to an improvement in the percentage of pupils attaining at Level 5. Pupils' skills in writing are beginning to rise, although some writing in their books shows that they have not significantly improved their grammar and spelling. Learning and progress are good for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Pupils' positive attitudes, and their politeness and courtesy, reflect their good spiritual, social, cultural and social development. They have a keen sense of right and wrong and celebrate the achievements of people from different walks of life because they are taught to be aware of, and to understand, diverse cultures. The school is developing links with a local school with a contrasting population to further enhance pupils' cultural development. Pupils say they feel safe and like coming to school because everyone is friendly. They relish the many positions of responsibility available and, because the school acts on most of their suggestions, they appreciate the value of their contributions to improving school life. They also relish their work in the community, whether it is their chosen fund-raising campaigns, for example, sponsoring an orphan in Rwanda, or presenting concerts for the village residents.

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Lessons are carefully planned to meet the needs of the different ages, abilities and interests of pupils in each class. Support staff are used well to teach in classes, small groups and with individuals. This ensures that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are appropriately supported and challenged to achieve their targets. Teachers are beginning to focus more on improving pupils' writing skills in order to raise attainment. Occasionally, when the teacher speaks for too long, pupils' engagement and concentration wavers. Good relationships are evident in classes and around school. Teachers' good use of assessment enables them to set work at the right level to challenge all pupils and to help them reach their targets. Most pupils know how to improve their work because of careful and thorough marking but, on occasions, opportunities are missed to use assessment to improve pupils' presentation of their work.

Leaders and governors have concentrated on providing a curriculum that is based on improving pupils' basic skills and is sufficiently enriched to enable pupils to be creative and enjoy learning. This has worked well, because the curriculum reflects the ability and interests of each pupil and pupils have been involved in its planning. Consequently, there are many topics about animals, for instance, which have included development of all the basic skills and, among other subjects, art, history, science, music and modern foreign languages. The curriculum is less effective when it does not take into account what pupils have learned previously, especially in writing.

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

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Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are confident and improve their self-esteem because of the outstanding personal support they receive from dedicated teachers, teaching assistants and specialist staff. The school works very effectively with outside agencies to support the most vulnerable families, to ensure the safety of all pupils and to keep attendance rates high. Pupils settle down very quickly and happily when they move into Year 1 because they are very well prepared and used to working together. Their transition to secondary school is smooth because pupils are given the opportunity to visit their next school. In addition, former pupils come back into St. Stephen's to talk to Year 6 about the next stage in their education.

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?

Leaders, members of the governing body and staff are determined to improve pupils' personal and academic development. They have adopted a new assessment system to support pupils' progress towards their challenging targets. Differences in pupils' attainment in writing, for example, are beginning to narrow, reflecting the school's commitment to equality of opportunity. The school places a strong focus on tackling discrimination, based on the promotion of respect for people from all walks of life. Leaders are working hard to improve this further by developing pupils' understanding of the cultural diversity of the town. Safeguarding arrangements go beyond national requirements, especially in staff training and in the use of funds to help make the site secure. The governing body is actively involved in school life and supports the school's work well. It is increasingly challenging the school's performance, but has not been fully involved in measuring the effectiveness of the school's actions. The management of finances is astute and the governing body has successfully managed financial resources to reduce the school's deficit considerably.

The promotion of community cohesion is a particular strength of the school's work because of the school's wide contribution to a range of activities at local, national and international level. As well as links with local schools, there is a close partnership with a school in Egypt. The school welcomes its relationship with parents and carers and fosters their involvement in school life.

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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	2
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

Children are looked after carefully, enjoy taking part in the many activities prepared for them and are very enthusiastic about playing and learning. Teaching quality is good and is particularly effective in activities where children use their own knowledge and experiences to extend their learning. In one activity, children used plastic money and priced plants and flowers to act as shopkeepers and customers. They took turns to carefully work out sums to determine what change the customer required. Occasionally, children sit on the carpet for too long and some become restless. Although the teaching and learning of writing skills is well planned, there are too few opportunities for children to practice their skills in their own time in play activities, both indoors and outdoors. Positive relationships between children and adults characterise the careful attention to children's needs that is evident in this welcoming setting. Leadership and management are good. Staff work very well as a team and there are very good links with parents and carers, who are very supportive of their children's learning, both in school and at home.

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

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

Views of parents and carers

Almost a half of parents and carers responded through the completed questionnaires, sometimes for more than one child. Of these, the vast majority were happy with the school's provision and indicated that their children enjoyed school and that pupils' behaviour was good. All parents and carers agreed that the school helped their children to have a healthy lifestyle and inspection findings confirm that this aspect is excellent. A very small number of parents and carers had concerns, for example, about their child's progress and whether behaviour was dealt with effectively. The inspector did not find evidence to support these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Stephen's Tockholes CofE 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 inspector received 16 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 49 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	12	75	4	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	13	81	2	13	1	6	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	11	69	5	31	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	63	5	31	0	0	1	6
The teaching is good at this school	11	69	4	25	1	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	63	5	31	1	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	56	7	44	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)	7	44	6	38	1	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	63	6	38	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	50	7	44	1	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	44	9	56	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	9	56	6	38	1	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	69	5	31	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 all 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



9 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Stephen's Tockholes CofE Primary School, Darwen, BB3 0LX

I wish to thank you for your help and for talking with me when I visited your school. I listened carefully to what you had to say and looked closely at the returned questionnaires many of you completed. I would particularly like to thank the pupils who held a meeting with me. You were all very polite and welcoming and I enjoyed my visit very much. Thank you all.

You are cared for extremely well and become confident and caring young people. Unsurprisingly, you enjoy coming to school and your attendance is first-rate. Well done to you and your families! You are exceptionally health conscious and keen to keep fit through all your sporting activities. Children in the Reception class are welcomed into school and enjoy playing and learning.

You make good progress in your work, which is of a good standard. You do your best work in reading and mathematics. I would like you to improve your work in writing. I have asked your school to concentrate more on improving your handwriting, your presentation of work and your spelling, punctuation and grammar. I would like younger children, in particular, to have more chances to practise their writing. I have also asked your school to make sure the governing body and teachers are involved in seeing how well you are doing in improving your work, especially in writing. You can play a part in this because I know how much you enjoy a challenge and like doing well in all your subjects.

I wish you all the very best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Marie Cordey
Lead inspector

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