

Baxenden St John's Church of England Primary School

Church Avenue, Baxenden, Accrington, Lancashire, BB5 2RQ

Inspection dates 14–15 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- Pupils of all abilities do not make consistently good progress in all subjects and classes, because the quality of teaching is not consistently good.
- The pace of learning is sometimes too slow, especially during the introductions to lessons.
- Teaching does not always encourage pupils to work things out for themselves.
- Teachers do not always give pupils of all abilities, including the most-able, work that is sufficiently challenging.
- Teachers' marking does not consistently show pupils precisely enough how to improve their work.
- There is not yet enough rigour in checking on the quality of teaching.
- Middle leaders are not fully involved in checking the quality of teaching and pupils' progress throughout the school.
- Governors do not fully understand how well the school is doing and do not hold it rigorously enough to account.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher provides strong leadership in this improving school. She is ambitious for the school and keen for all pupils to do their best. She is ably supported by the deputy headteacher, and they have taken effective action to eliminate weak teaching and create a culture where pupils are eager to learn.
- The teaching of reading has improved. Pupils now make good progress in early reading skills.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 5 and 6.
- Teaching assistants provide valuable support for groups of pupils in lessons.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning, behave well and are thoughtful and kind to one another. They feel safe and well looked after.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 16 lessons, including one observation carried out jointly with the headteacher. The inspectors listened to pupils reading and observed the teaching of early reading skills. They observed teaching in small support groups. They also looked at examples of pupils' work to obtain a view of teaching and learning over time.
- Discussions took place with pupils, parents, the Chair and Vice-chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority, senior leaders and other staff.
- The inspectors took account of 41 responses to the Ofsted on-line questionnaire, Parent View, the most recent parental surveys carried out by the school and 10 staff questionnaires.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including data on pupils' progress across the school, the school's view of its own effectiveness and its development planning, records of the quality of teaching and learning, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documentation in relation to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Christine Potter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Emma Jackson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is well below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the current government floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school provides a breakfast club.
- Since the last inspection, there have been significant staffing changes, including the appointment of a new deputy headteacher. An assistant headteacher was seconded to the school in January 2013. There have been a number of temporary teaching appointments over the past two years.
- There have been changes to the governing body since the last inspection. The Chair and Vice-Chair have been in post since November 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, in order to accelerate pupils' progress, by:
 - making sure that all teachers provide work that is sufficiently challenging for pupils of different abilities, including the most able
 - speeding up the pace of learning, especially during the introductions to lessons
 - improving teachers' marking so that it always shows pupils how to make their work better
 - giving pupils more opportunities to work things out for themselves.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management, including governance, in order to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement, by:
 - making the monitoring of teaching more rigorous to bring about rapid and sustained improvement
 - developing the role of middle leaders so that they are fully involved in checking the quality of teaching and pupils' progress through the school
 - making sure that governors have a secure and accurate view of the school's performance and rigorously hold school leaders to account for improving teaching and achievement.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils of all abilities do not make consistently good progress in all subjects and classes. In most classes, pupils make the progress expected of them from their individual starting points, but not enough of them make progress which is better than this in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are similar to, or slightly above, those which are typical for their age. They settle quickly and soon become confident and independent. The school's data shows that children made steady progress in all areas of learning last year, although there are signs that improvements to planning and the range of activities are enabling children to make better progress this year.
- Pupils continue to make steady progress, and reach broadly average standards overall at the end of Key Stage 1. They do better in reading and mathematics than they do in writing.
- Despite some inconsistencies in teaching in Key Stage 2, pupils' progress in Years 5 and 6, where teaching is consistently good, accelerates rapidly. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above average at the end of Key Stage 2. In 2013, an above average proportion of pupils reached levels above those expected for their age in each subject.
- The most-able pupils make similar progress to other pupils in most classes. They are not always sufficiently challenged to do better than this. However, this improves in the later stages of Key Stage 2, where work is planned that stretches them further so that they make good progress. The proportion of pupils who reached the highest level possible in mathematics was above average in 2013. There are indications that this good achievement will be repeated this year, and that some pupils will also attain the highest possible level in reading.
- The very small numbers of pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support make similar progress to other pupils, so that there are no gaps between their performance and that of other pupils. This demonstrates the school's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity. In 2013, there were no pupils eligible for free school meals in Year 6.
- Most disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make expected progress from their individual starting points. There are signs that some of them are now making good progress because of the improved support that they are now receiving.
- Achievement in reading has improved. Senior leaders have introduced a far more systematic way of teaching early reading skills. The proportion of pupils in Year 1 who reached the expected standard in reading words increased significantly in 2013 and was well above average. Older pupils have exceptionally positive attitudes to reading. They eagerly talk about and compare the wide range of books that they have read.
- Work in pupils' books shows that they are mostly making steady progress and developing broadly average skills and understanding in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics. They have good opportunities to use their skills in information and communication technology to support their learning in different subjects.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although teaching is improving, and some good and outstanding teaching was observed during the inspection, over time it has not been consistently good enough to ensure that pupils make good progress. There is still some teaching that requires improvement. This is due in part to inconsistencies in staffing over the past two years.
- Learning does not always move at a fast enough pace, especially in the introductions to lessons, to ensure that all pupils make good progress.
- Teachers do not always give pupils of all abilities, including the most-able, work that is sufficiently challenging, in order to speed up their progress and enable them to reach higher levels.

- On too many occasions teachers do too much explaining. This stops pupils finding out things for themselves and acts as a barrier to deepening pupils' knowledge and understanding. This is particularly evident in some mathematics lessons, where basic skills are generally taught well, but pupils do not have enough opportunities to solve problems and carry out investigations on their own.
- Work in pupils' books shows that teachers' marking, whilst it has improved and does now offer pupils some constructive guidance, does not consistently show pupils in all classes precisely how to improve their work.
- Good relationships and the use of praise and encouragement are strong features of all lessons. Pupils are eager to learn, and they say how much they enjoy their lessons. Pupils say that teachers 'make lessons fun' and 'we learn something new every day'. Pupils take pride in what they do. Teachers make it clear to pupils exactly what they are expected to learn.
- The role of teaching assistants has been developed over the past two years and they now provide valuable support for pupils in all classes and lessons, both inside and outside the classroom. In all corners of the building, groups of pupils were observed working with teaching assistants. They were practising specific skills in mathematics or receiving additional support for learning their letters and sounds. The most-able pupils in Year 6 were learning to simplify algebraic expressions. Pupils say how much they appreciate this time, when teaching assistants 'just focus on you and what you need'.
- Where teaching is good or better, teachers question pupils skilfully to challenge and deepen their thinking. For example, pupils in Year 6 put numbers in groups and used this information to discover and explain rules about dividing them. Teachers check pupils' understanding at all stages of the lesson and provide additional explanations and support where necessary. The teacher gently prompted pupils in Year 5 who were finding it hard to identify the persuasive elements of a propaganda poster so that they were able to make good progress.
- Teachers place considerable emphasis on developing grammatical accuracy in pupils' writing. Older pupils talk confidently about subordinate clauses and the use of active and passive verbs. The teacher in Year 1 modelled sentence structure and gave pupils opportunities to rehearse orally what they wanted to write. Teachers of pupils of all ages promote pupils' speaking skills and vocabulary effectively.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the levels that they are working at. They say that their target cards show them 'exactly what they are aiming for', and older pupils are involved in assessing their own progress towards these targets.
- Teachers provide pupils with a range of homework activities which are well-planned and successfully reinforce what pupils have learnt in lessons. Pupils say how helpful this is. They enjoy the challenges that teachers set them to help them learn spellings and tables.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school is a very happy place, where pupils care about and respect one another. They play together well, and are highly considerate as they move around the school, including on staircases and in narrow corridors. They are unfailingly polite towards all members of staff. They hold doors open for adults and for one another and their 'thank you' and 'you're welcome' were a pleasure to hear.
- Pupils of all ages are keen to help and to take responsibility, such as for looking after younger pupils at playtimes, or counting out milk for their class. Children in the Reception class spontaneously helped each other to put on aprons before they did an independent painting activity.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, join in lessons enthusiastically and are eager to do well. They are confident and articulate, and mostly willing to 'have a go' when teachers ask them questions. Just occasionally, when the pace of learning slows, or activities are not sufficiently challenging, pupils lose interest in the lesson and become restless.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe in school, and also

when they take part in visits and sporting activities outside the school. Parents agree that the school keeps their children safe. The school makes sure that pupils learn how to stay safe in a range of situations beyond the school, such as when crossing roads, riding bicycles, and in relation to drugs and alcohol.

- Pupils report that incidents of bullying or name calling are extremely rare. They are able to talk to adults if they have any concerns and any issues are dealt with promptly and effectively. They demonstrate a good understanding of different types of bullying and know what to do if they see something that they don't like when using the computer.
- Senior leaders have worked hard and successfully to raise attendance. It is now consistently above average for all groups of pupils.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management, including governance, require improvement because the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement, whilst they have improved since the last inspection, are not yet consistently good.
- Senior leaders have taken effective action to eliminate weak teaching. They have introduced systems to check on the quality of teaching and have provided a broad range of support, guidance and training to improve teachers' skills. However, this has not yet had a sustained impact on the quality of teaching over time. This is partly due to the high turnover of teaching staff and the number of temporary appointments over the past two years.
- The headteacher has a clear vision for the future direction of the school. Her ambition and determination, and the support provided by other senior leaders, have driven improvements since the last inspection, for example, in the teaching of reading. Leaders and managers have an accurate view of how well the school is doing and where it could do better. They have successfully created a culture of learning in the school, where pupils behave well, are keen to learn and proud of their achievements. There is now greater stability amongst the teaching staff, who are enthusiastic and committed to doing the very best for all pupils. The school is therefore well placed to improve further.
- The period of change and instability in staffing has hindered the development of the role of middle leaders. They do not yet take a full role in checking the quality of teaching and learning across the school, although training is taking place to address this, including for the coordinator for special educational needs. Actions taken by her, including more accurate identification of pupils who need extra help and more targeted support for them, are already having a positive impact on their learning.
- The school provides well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have many opportunities to reflect on the world around them, and to discuss moral and social values such as respect and empathy. The school successfully fosters pupils' talents, particularly in music and sport. Pupils say how much they enjoy learning about and experimenting with different styles of art, including the work of artists such as Kandinsky and Edward Foster.
- The majority of parents are supportive of the school and appreciate the care that their children receive and the 'family atmosphere'. The school provides good opportunities for parents to be involved in supporting their children's learning through regular curriculum newsletters and reading diaries.
- The school makes good use of the primary school sports funding to improve pupils' physical well-being, through providing specialist physical education teaching and additional swimming for pupils. Local partnership working is providing additional training and support for staff, increased opportunities for pupils to take part in competitive sports and access to a wider range of resources.
- The local authority provides strong and effective support for the school, which is helping to drive improvements in all aspects of the school's work.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are strongly supportive of the school and are keen to see it improve further. They

have supported the headteacher when she has had to make difficult decisions. They understand their statutory responsibilities and ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. They are aware of the need to link decisions relating to pay progression to the outcomes of performance management, although no teachers have been eligible since the last inspection. They have a firm grasp on finances. They make sure that the small amount of pupil premium funding is being used effectively to support eligible pupils and they are fully committed to equality of opportunity. However, there have been several recent changes to the governing body, and they do not at this stage have a sufficiently secure and accurate understanding of the school's performance. This means that they are not able to hold school leaders rigorously to account for improving teaching and achievement.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	119440
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	430977

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	196
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gary Lee
Headteacher	Christina Regan
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2012
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