

Baxenden St John's Church of England Primary School

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

Inspection dates 9–10 October 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher is an inspirational leader who has worked tirelessly to bring about change. She has enthused staff by her hard work and drive, and overcome several barriers to improve the school. Attainment and teaching are better than at the previous inspection. She is supported well by the deputy headteacher and staff morale is high.
- Governance has improved. Governors are now effective because they have responded successfully to training and provide good support and challenge to leaders.
- Teaching is good and improving as teachers embed the many changes made. Interesting activities sustain pupils' interest.
- Provision for children in the early years is effective because of careful planning and the focus on organisation. Children make good progress, especially in their basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- From starting school to Year 6, pupils make good progress. Attainment has risen and is now well above average at the end of Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils are friendly, polite and well mannered. They go out of their way to welcome visitors. The school deserves the good reputation it has with parents and the community.
- Pupils enjoy school and feel safe. Attendance is high.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching does not always secure the best progress when tasks are not closely matched to pupils' abilities or when they do not have the opportunity to try out their own ideas.
- Pupils are sometimes confused about what is expected of them and an adult is not always at hand to point them in the right direction.
- The role of subject leader has not improved as fast as other aspects of the school because of the many staff changes. Most subject leaders are new to the role and do not make the best use of information about pupils' progress when setting priorities for their subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons, small groups and as part of the routine of the day.
- Discussions were held with staff, members of the governing body, the local authority and pupils.
- Pupils' work was analysed with a focus on writing, mathematics and science.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's improvement plan, the checks made on pupils' progress, the minutes of meetings held by the governing body and information about safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of the 23 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and also spoke to parents, especially as they dropped their children off at school at the start of the day.
- Five responses from staff to the inspection questionnaire were analysed.

Inspection team

Jennifer Platt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Barbara Harrold

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average and these pupils are not at the early stages of learning to speak English.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and eligible for the pupil premium is well below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been several improvements made to the building and changes in staff since the previous inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching even further and increase pupils' progress by:
 - checking that tasks always meet the needs of the different abilities of pupils and they have enough opportunities to try out their own ideas, for example in science
 - keeping an eye on pupils as they learn to make sure they understand what they have to do and ensuring that help is at hand when needed.
- Improve leadership and management by developing the role of the new subject leaders so that their action plans identify more precise priorities based on the assessment of pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The progress made by the school since the previous inspection is largely due to the determination of the headteacher. Her high expectations and work ethic have helped changes to be implemented. She is ably supported by the deputy headteacher; together they have established a commitment to improvement and embedded a culture of ambition. The principle of valuing the individual pupil underpins the leadership of the school and ensures equality of opportunity. This is supported by governors and, with more stability of staffing, it ensures the school is well placed to improve.
- The school's evaluation of its own performance is accurate, showing a clear understanding about what is working well and the current priorities. Information is collected by close checking of teaching and pupils' progress.
- Teaching is evaluated in many different ways, including a review of pupils' work and advice offered where it is most needed. More precise tracking ensures any pupils in danger of underachieving are supported to improve. Success is clear and demonstrated, for example, by the booster support for Year 6 in mathematics and the increase in pupils reaching the high Level 6. The school receives limited pupil premium but this funding is used effectively to offer additional adult support where it is needed.
- Teachers are set targets based on the progress pupils make. Regular meetings with senior leaders review progress, and staff are now more prepared to explain any dips and propose how these can be overcome. This information is used in managing teachers' performance, and professional support and challenge are provided when practice does not reach the required level. Salary rewards are linked to achievement of targets.
- Planning is based on the evidence gleaned from monitoring procedures. This information feeds the school's development plan that now makes it clear how success is to be measured. Success is evident in the improved progress across the school. The impact of the focus on phonics (letters and sounds) has led to the remarkable achievement of 100% success in the Year 1 screening check in phonics. Senior leaders ensure the school also keeps ahead of current national initiatives. The move to the use of different tests for reading and spelling is preparing staff well for changes to assessment without the use of the current system of National Curriculum levels.
- Action plans for subjects are less precise because the management role of middle leaders is not fully effective. This has been hampered by staffing changes and most subjects now have new leaders. Currently, not enough use is made of assessment information to link the current priorities and actions to raising attainment. Nevertheless, discussion with middle leaders shows audits are underway and they are quickly becoming aware of what needs attention.
- The curriculum has been adjusted in line with current national changes. It is planned thoroughly to meet the needs of all pupils. The focus on basic skills has not diminished the opportunities for music, art and physical activities. Opportunities to extend literacy and numeracy skills are evident in other subjects. The attention to science has improved although, at times, too much information from teachers limits the scope for pupils to make decisions about their work in this subject and others.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted extremely well. It is fostered in the daily life of the school. Through the warm relationships, welcoming atmosphere and opportunities to support others less fortunate than themselves, the pupils learn to recognise their role in society. They value their own faith but, through visits to other places of worship and learning about different cultures, also show a respect for other cultures in modern Britain.
- The primary school sport funding has been used wisely to extend pupils' experiences as well as to improve teachers' skills. More after-school sport is available with an increase in uptake from 30% to 50%. Specialist coaches lead lessons and teachers observe and pick up new ideas.
- Partnership with parents has improved with regular newsletters and more information about their children's progress. There is good support for many of the exciting productions and events that are features of the school.
- Safeguarding procedures meet requirements.
- The local authority has offered very effective advice during the changes to the building and the turbulence in staffing. Training has been appreciated and a very useful annual report shows clearly the progress the school is making.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has undergone considerable change and is now effective. Training and the review of data about the pupils' progress has enabled governors to ask more challenging questions about pupils' achievement compared with national data. The governors' Standards and Effectiveness sub-committee

is valued as an honest forum linked with the local authority and senior leaders to drive forward progress. The request for information before meetings has enabled governors to arrive more prepared, and this has increased their ability to raise concerns and query future actions.

- Governors are aware of how the additional funding for sport and disadvantaged pupils is used. They recognise the impact on pupils' involvement in sport and the lack of any significant gaps in the progress of different groups of pupils.
- Governors are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching because they are regular visitors to the school, and observe what is happening in classes. This has enabled them to be reassured that the changes to managing behaviour have had a positive impact on learning and the culture of the school. They check that salary rewards link closely to improved performance.
- Financial management is effective in balancing the budget while improving the environment of the school. Governors now audit their skills and make sure their input is beneficial to the school. They are now confident that this is a school that parents can confidently select for their children.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils follow the new card system which makes it very clear that teachers have high expectations of their behaviour. In assembly and often at play, their behaviour is exemplary. The pupils are often praised for their behaviour on visits. Assemblies reveal a love of singing, which is tuneful and enjoyed by all.
- Pupils were consulted about their choice of colour for their new uniforms and, as a result, wear them with great pride. They are courteous to visitors and eager to share their positive opinions of the school. Older pupils appreciate the more recent changes, especially the improvements in resources for information and communication technology.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and many produce high-quality work. At times, when teaching does not fully inspire them or they are unsure of what they have to do, pupils become restless and give less attention to their work.
- The curriculum includes opportunities to learn of other faiths and cultures and pupils recognise they have a role to play in society. The Eco Council is just one example of how they are taught their role in protecting the environment. Pupils enjoy school and it is not surprising attendance is consistently high.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils know there is always someone to talk to if they have a problem, although some felt this is more difficult at lunchtime. They have a good understanding about different types of bullying and identified some concerns about name calling including homophobic language. Pupils felt this was mainly linked to falling out with friends and was resolved with staff support.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in different situations. The Life Education Van visits to provide details on healthy living and pupils take heed of these messages. They recognise the dangers of using the internet and are aware of the need to keep their identity secure.
- Members of the school council take very seriously their role in school. They are currently carrying out an audit to see how they can improve links with the community and preparing a letter for the local Member of Parliament. Councillors are very proud of their school. They feel the school is fun and pupils reflect the school motto that says Baxenden Bees must be kind, smart and honest.

The quality of teaching is good

- Achievement has risen as a result of effective teaching over time. Staff are now more secure with implementing changes to behaviour management and assessment and this consistency is improving progress as pupils move from year to year.
- Classrooms include vibrant displays and are busy places that ensure pupils are eager to learn. A wide variety of methods sustain their learning. Pupils make good use of checklists that make it clear what they need to include in their work to achieve success. This enhances their confidence as they assess their own learning and identify how to improve.
- Teachers are skilled at managing pupils' behaviour. They consistently apply the new card system, which helps pupils to be aware of when they are overstepping the mark and the repercussions of this. As a result, pupils behave well and lessons run smoothly.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this successfully to ask challenging questions. They do not always ask the pupils with their hands up and this keeps all of the pupils alert.
- While learning is often rapid, it slows when pupils are unsure of what they are expected to do. Sometimes this is linked to an overload of tasks and, although they may be interesting activities, this leads to lengthy instructions that confuse pupils. As a result, as they set to their tasks, pupils are not really sure of what is expected of them. This also makes it harder for staff to be at hand to move learning on and clarify tasks.
- Assessment is generally used well to set tasks that match pupils' abilities. This is better when pupils are working in groups and the success in challenging the most able is clear in the increase in numbers reaching higher levels. However, at times, when the pupils are taught as a whole class, information is too hard for some, and too easy for others who then have to wait for others to catch up. On occasions, pupils do not have enough opportunities to come up with their own ideas as, for example, in deciding how to record their findings in science.
- Reading is taught effectively, starting with the successful teaching of phonics using games and practical activities that ensure pupils recall the information. Challenging texts are used by older pupils who recalled enjoying *Macbeth* and could describe their favourite part. Pupils say they enjoy the regular guided reading sessions as they share a book with others, as well as having to locate information and answer hard questions.
- Activities to make writing more imaginative are reaping benefits. For example, pupils in Year 2 enjoyed searching in the outdoor area for signs of the visiting dinosaur before creating lists of imaginative words.
- Teachers skilfully model different methods of calculations in mathematics and then insist pupils show their calculations. This enables teachers to identify any misunderstandings and offer more advice.
- Teachers mark pupils' work carefully and often set extra practice if an error occurs. Pupils have individual targets which are written in the first person, making it clear what they need to do to improve. These are referred to in marking so that pupils can keep a check on their own progress. Comments offer advice and, for older pupils, make it very clear when teachers feel the work is not up to the standard expected.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement is good and has risen in all subjects. Stronger teaching with a focus on using assessment information to check more closely that pupils are not falling behind ensures pupils make good progress from their individual starting points.
- As children leave the early years and start in Year 1, their attainment has varied linked to changes in teaching and the ability of the cohort. It has been broadly in line with the levels expected but rising over the course of last year. The unvalidated results of teachers' assessment at the end of Year 2 in 2014 show a rising trend in attainment to above average in reading and mathematics. The results also showed writing was improving but not at the same rate as other subjects. A detailed scrutiny of pupils' current books shows that in response to stronger teaching, writing is now moving along at speed. Many pupils currently in Year 2 are already working at the level expected by the end of Year 2 and they are well on track to be above average at the end of the year.
- Progress in Key Stage 2 is good and attainment is also rising. Unvalidated results of 2014 tests in Year 6 show attainment was well above average in reading, writing and mathematics and this is also the case for the current Year 6.
- Reading is strong throughout the school. Pupils are taught phonics most successfully and, in 2014, every pupil reached the expected level in the national screening check in Year 1. Pupils apply these skills to unlock longer words and are very pleased with their success. Older pupils benefit from an imaginative choice of books and chat about their current favourites, which are humorous and mystery books. Many read fluently with expression and understanding.
- Writing has improved in Year 2 because pupils are more interested in the topics. For example, cartoons introduced them to describing characters and they started to use vocabulary like 'nervous' and 'feeling surprised'. Older pupils are more adept at structuring their writing into paragraphs and some examples include lovely detail to explain the characters. Many write neatly; punctuation and grammar are improving at a faster rate than spelling. However, the additional basic skills sessions are moving pupils in the right direction as they apply the spelling rules they are taught.
- The focus on mental mathematics and multiplication tables is giving pupils the skills required to solve problems. The school has some highly skilled mathematicians working at the very high Level 6.
- The most able pupils are usually suitably challenged and overall their progress is good. At times, work is not always hard enough and these pupils do not make enough progress. However, the rise in the number of pupils reaching above-average levels, especially at the end of Key Stage 2, is testimony to their overall

good achievement. In the spelling, grammar and punctuation assessment in 2014, early indications show that 77% reached the high Level 5.

- Pupils with special educational needs are identified carefully and actions taken ensure their needs are fully met. This is especially the case in reading with extra time allocated to read to an adult and check phonics skills. Overall, their progress is good.
- The school has very few disadvantaged pupils or pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are too few for an analysis of their progress and attainment in national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 to be meaningful. However, a review of overall progress of different groups of pupils reveals no significant gaps and all make similar progress.
- The previous inspection identified science as a subject requiring attention. Pupils' books show pupils have good subject knowledge but there is less evidence of investigation. Pupils did not see science as their favourite subject. On the other hand, music, art and physical education are all enjoyed and evidence during the inspection points to high-quality work.

The early years provision

is good

- Children start school with attainment that is typical for their age. Over the last two years, attainment has risen and currently children leave the early years with a level of skills that are above those expected for their age. Detailed records identify good progress. They are well prepared academically and socially for Key Stage 1.
- Effective teaching ensures children are aware of the systems established to ensure the day runs smoothly. Kind and caring relationships ensure children feel safe. They have already settled happily and understand what is expected of them. Behaviour is good and many have already made several friends. They enjoy being in the outdoor area which, although small, is used imaginatively. For example, when learning to identify initial sounds, children matched them with pictures and placed them in large hoops. Indoors, some children became restless as the phonics session required a lot of listening. They were ready to be more active, being tempted by the imaginative resources on offer.
- Prompt assessment has identified those who may have special educational needs and they are given extra help. Similarly, the most able are promptly challenged. For example, they were moved on to count to 20 when they revealed their skills counting to 10.
- The curriculum has been adjusted to increase the focus on children trying things for themselves. Resources show a balance of activities to cover all aspects of the curriculum indoors and outside.
- Management is effective in ensuring that children are safe. Staff are deployed well, making good use of assessment information to check that children are being taught at the correct level. For example, during the inspection, one child was moved to a higher-level group for phonics because of the progress made. Parents are kept well informed and enjoy taking part in activities such as the Christmas crafts. Relationships are good between staff, parents and children.

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	452019

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	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gary Lee
Headteacher	Christina Regan
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2014
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