



Pilling St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119555
LEA Lancashire
Inspection number 280593
Inspection dates 6 July 2006 to 7 July 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Dave Byrne

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Ladies Hill
School category	Voluntary aided		Pilling
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Preston, Lancashire
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01253 790282
Number on roll	70	Fax number	01253 799148
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr E Moorat
Date of previous inspection	1 January 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Pauline Tate

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small, rural school. Children's attainment on entry to Reception fluctuates from year to year but is average overall. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. The percentage identified with learning and/or behavioural difficulties varies from below to well above average according to the natural ability of each year group. The headteacher has been in post for less than three terms.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St John's is a good school with some outstanding features. It gives good value for money. These judgements match those of the school. It works very closely with its local community and benefits from the strong support and respect of parents and pupils. It is safe, caring and secure. The headteacher's outstanding leadership enables teachers and pupils to express their own views and have ownership of what they do. Pupils' behaviour is excellent, and they form excellent relationships and display high levels of care for others. As one parent put it, '...the school has a real sense of togetherness which engenders good social skills and respect, resulting in the valuing of the whole child'.

Even though academic standards have been above average for some years, expectations have recently been raised and achievement is good. Teaching and learning are good. They have been improved by much better use of assessment to meet the needs of each pupil. As a result, pupils' academic progress is more rapid and their self-belief is stronger. Provision in the Foundation Stage has recently improved and is good overall. Children achieve high levels of personal, social and emotional development and secure skills in speaking, reading, writing and numeracy. They maintain good progress in these skills so that the large majority of pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 reach the standards expected for their age, and many exceed them. Pupils in Year 6 are good at mathematics, speak with self-assurance and are advanced readers. They have good scientific knowledge and the confidence to use computers. The content and structure of their writing are good, but their handwriting and spelling could be better.

Bold changes to the curriculum are making learning exciting and relevant to the pupils' lives. This stems from improved links between subjects and from more imaginative use of the school grounds, the local area and educational visits. The planning of such links, however, is not yet systematic enough to ensure that all pupils build all relevant skills and understanding in each subject as they move through the school. Team spirit is strong between all staff, and teaching assistants play a crucial part in the school's success. Most aspects of school management are effectively shared by all staff under the headteacher's clear, enthusiastic and perceptive leadership. Governors are supportive and closely involved. They make sure that all spending decisions benefit pupils' education. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall. Currently, the school is improving rapidly and has the capacity to continue to do so.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the standard of pupils' handwriting and improve the accuracy of their spelling.
- Refine curriculum planning to ensure that pupils steadily build up their subject skills and knowledge as they move through the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. From an average attainment on entry, children in the Foundation Stage make good progress. By the end of the Reception year, the great majority achieve the goals expected for their age, and some exceed them. They do well in their personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, and knowledge and understanding of the world. The good progress continues through Years 1 to 6. As numbers are so small, comparisons of trends and results at the end of Years 2 and 6 are not reliable guides to whole-school performance. In 2005, half of the Year 6 pupils had learning and/or behavioural difficulties, and most of these pupils joined the class in Years 5 and 6. As a result, standards dipped from being significantly above average in the previous two years to being significantly below average. Despite this, the progress of most pupils was good. In Year 2, standards were average. The school set challenging targets in English, mathematics and science for pupils now in Year 6. Up-to-date school data show that these targets have been achieved, and standards are above average. In writing and spelling, however, pupils in both key stages could do better, but the actions taken are starting to make this happen. Pupils with learning and/or behavioural difficulties make good progress because of the good support they receive. Pupils' skills in art and design are outstanding and they enjoy considerable success in sport.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. As a result, behaviour is outstanding, pupils love school and attendance is good. Pupils develop a good awareness of moral issues such as those related to the environmental threat to our planet. Spirituality develops well through art, dance and regular use of the outdoor classroom. Parents accurately view the school as 'like one big family'. Older pupils care for younger ones and events such as the praise assembly and the wholehearted singing of 'Happy Birthday' to a classmate during lunch reflect the excellent relationships across the school. Through initiatives such as the early morning 'wake and shake', the lunchtime 'clean tray awards', and the promotion of safe cycling to school, pupils gain a good knowledge of how to live safely and healthily. They are encouraged to express their views and take initiative. In Year 6, for example, pupils have organised a talent competition to raise funds for their leaving gift. This is an example of their growing awareness of enterprise and their good preparation for life ahead. Good links with the community create a good understanding of their local culture and links with a multi-cultural school give pupils a good insight into other cultures. Well-planned induction procedures smooth children's start in Reception, and very good links with the local high school ease transition to the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Because teaching and learning are good, pupils make good overall progress. In the Reception class, recent improvements in planning, coupled with an injection of resources, have boosted children's progress. In Key Stages 1 and 2, teachers' knowledge of the pupils ensures that the diverse needs within the mixed-age classes are effectively met. Work is often imaginatively presented, for example, in art, and pupils are increasingly challenged to think and to make decisions for themselves. This particularly quickens the progress of the more able pupils, who respond positively to such challenges. Support for pupils with learning and/or behavioural difficulties is good and teaching assistants make a significant contribution. The process of marking is good overall because it gives pupils good guidance about how to improve their work. Expectations for handwriting, however, vary from class to class, and at times presentation and spelling are relatively weak. Their very positive relationships with their teachers give pupils the confidence to try things out without fear of failure. This is accelerating the rate of progress across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and has improved since the last inspection. It meets all needs well. Under the clear influence of the headteacher, thoughtful adaptations of national guidance are forging closer links between subjects, and imaginative whole-school topics are bringing lessons to life. As a result, there is a buzz of excitement in lessons which is lifting standards higher. However, the improvements to the curriculum are not yet planned well enough to make sure that pupils systematically build up their skills and knowledge over time in subjects other than English, mathematics and science. Close links with the community and with other schools, together with the positive contributions of educational visits and visitors, bring richer interest to classroom learning. A good range of high-quality, and sometimes unusual, extra-curricular activities, broadens pupils' learning experiences.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. In all aspects of school life, in lessons, at play and during lunch, pupils are well cared for and supported. Child protection and health and safety arrangements are effective. Excellent relationships across the school enable pupils to feel safe and secure, and to be confident with others. The school tracks and guides pupils' progress well, especially in English and mathematics, and carefully monitors their personal development. The support given to pupils with learning and/or behavioural difficulties is very good because of very good management and effective teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is an outstanding leader who knows the school inside out and has high aspirations for its success. Every child matters and the school successfully strives to meet every need. Many changes are being introduced that are strengthening the school: staff are enthusiastically devising new and exciting ways of planning the curriculum; pupils are being given more scope to express themselves creatively; and, assessment is being used well as a tool for identifying the needs of all. Staff training and links with other schools are broadening the experience of staff and improving their skills in managing subjects. The school's evaluation of its own strengths and weaknesses is generally accurate and sets out a clear agenda for future improvement.

Governance is good. The governors keep a close eye on the school and work closely with the headteacher to ensure that the budget is efficiently spent and resources wisely deployed. Overall, the school has improved satisfactorily since the last inspection. It is now improving rapidly and, given the current circumstances, it has the capacity to continue to improve.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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To the pupils of:

Pilling St John's Church of England VA Primary School

Ladies Hill

Pilling

Preston

Lancashire

PR3 6HA

7 July 2006

Dear Pupils

I will remember for a long time your warmth and friendliness. Politeness and care are important parts of being a pupil at St John's, and a smile seems to be essential! You attend a good school that has some outstanding features. These aren't there by accident; they are there because of the efforts of all the adults who help and support you in school and the help of everyone in your family.

You do well in mathematics, science and most elements of English. Some of your art work is outstanding and many of you have a good potential in sport. Successful people, such as the top singers, dancers, actors and business people, only stay at the top because they work hard and try to improve all the time. In discussions, I was pleased to learn that many of you are really keen to do as well as possible. You seem to have a good sense of what you do well and how you can get better. One of you told me that you would like to write more neatly, and this is important for many of you. Even though your writing is good in its ideas and in the use of punctuation and lively and exciting words, your handwriting and spelling could be much better. I have asked the school to find ways to help you to improve these areas of your work.

It is great to see all of the exciting ways that you learn. The efforts you have been making to Save the Whale, using the pond in your garden and Internet research, are very impressive! Your teachers are really helping you to think for yourselves and become good citizens. The way you raise funds for charity and help each other in school shows how much you care for others. In this way you add something positive to everyone's life, including your own.

Your headteacher knows each of you very well and works tirelessly to get the best for you. Her level of dedication, which is shared by all of your teachers and school staff, is what gives you such a good time at school. Many new ideas are being tried out to make your lessons exciting

and fun. This is good, but I have also asked the school to make sure that the way they plan your work helps you to build your learning steadily in all subjects through the school.

I hope that you continue to enjoy being part of the St John's family and always try your best, even when you find things hard. If you do as well as you can in your lessons and also find something you are good at, such as sport, art or music, you will have a good chance of success in life ahead. Above all, however, continuing to be thoughtful, caring and helpful to others will make sure that you always have good friends, maybe for life.

I wish you all good luck for your future.

Yours sincerely

David Byrne (Lead Inspector)