



Great Marsden St John's Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119436
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 291419
Inspection dates 9–10 November 2006
Reporting inspector Alastair Younger

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Trent Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Nelson, Lancashire
Age range of pupils	4–11		BB9 0NX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01282 615055
Number on roll (school)	198	Fax number	01282 697750
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Glenn Tunbridge
		Headteacher	Mrs Lesley Fitzpatrick
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school. It serves an area with some social and economic disadvantage but the pupils' attainment on entry to the school is broadly typical for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to most other schools. Fewer than average pupils come from minority ethnic families. The headteacher has been in post for just over two years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The school feels that pupils' achievement is satisfactory and that the quality of teaching, leadership and management is good. The inspection found all of these areas to be inadequate.

As a result, in accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

A year ago there were concerns about pupils' behaviour. Following consultation with parents and pupils, successful initiatives introduced by the leadership team resulted in considerable improvement. As a result, parents, pupils and staff all report this is now a much brighter, happier school than it was. Nearly all parents say their children enjoy attending but, in a questionnaire sent out before the inspection, a few did raise concerns that their children were not making enough progress. Despite some improvements in aspects of English and mathematics at Key Stage 1 and in English at Key Stage 2, last year's overall results in the national tests were the worst for five years. Children's performance at the end of Reception last year was lower than it was at the start of it in reading, phonics and mathematics. In Key Stage 1 in 2006 the lowest scores for five years were recorded in reading, writing, mathematics and science. In Key Stage 2, results for mathematics and science were the lowest for five years but English results were slightly better than in 2005. Across the whole school, achievement is inadequate and standards are below average because teaching is not good enough. Pupils are not sufficiently challenged, the pace of learning is often slow and pupils do not have enough opportunities to build systematically on previous learning. This has a detrimental effect on pupils' future prospects.

Whilst leaders and managers have not been successful in raising standards, they have ensured that school is safe. Pupils are well protected, helped to stay safe and encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles. They are aware that through their thoughts and actions they can contribute to improving the school community.

Performance has not been monitored in sufficient detail. Over-positive evaluation of the school's effectiveness is holding back its improvement. The governing body has not done enough to hold the school's leadership and management to account. The good drive to improve the ethos of the school has not been matched by keeping a close enough eye on raising standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and increase pupils' progress, especially in mathematics and science.
- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that all learners are appropriately challenged through tasks which allow them to build systematically on previous learning.

- Monitor the school's performance more accurately and critically, using the findings to improve self-evaluation and raise standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Achievement throughout the school and for all distinct groups of pupils is not good enough. Standards are below average. This is because the teaching is inadequate. At the end of Key Stage 2 standards are broadly average in English but well below average in mathematics and science. No information about the value that was added to pupils' progress last year was available to the inspection but the value added in 2005 was significantly below average and this year's will be lower.

Children do not achieve well enough in the Reception class. The attainment of new pupils is broadly average. The results of a national system for measuring performance show pupils scoring lower at the end of their first year in school than they did at the start of it. This has been the case in reading, including phonics, and mathematics for each of the last four years. Inexperience amongst staff and an underdeveloped curriculum are contributing to low achievement.

Until 2006, Key Stage 1 pupils were doing well. Their scores in tests were higher than the national average and significantly so in 2005. Last year's results show that this is no longer the case. Results in reading, writing, mathematics and science were the lowest for five years. From a position in 2003 when about a third of pupils were exceeding national expectations, none did so last year in writing or science and only two did so in mathematics.

In 2006, Key Stage 2 pupils recorded the worst results in national tests for five years. The school met its target for English, mainly because reading improved. The proportion of pupils exceeding the national expectation fell to a three-year low but overall standards in English were broadly average. In mathematics, fewer than half of the pupils reached the nationally expected level, half as many as did so the previous year. Standards in mathematics and science are extremely low.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There have been huge improvements in pupils' behaviour over the past year and it is now good. The only misbehaviour witnessed by inspectors resulted from some pupils' intolerance of weak teaching. Pupils are exceptionally polite and show a good awareness of others, holding doors open and taking turns. In an assembly many pupils took the opportunity to say how they had helped one another over the day. Attendance matches the national average. Parents say their children enjoy school: most pupils agree. Several voice the opinion that although playtimes are better than they were, some lessons are still boring. Improving behaviour has brought a higher degree of safety. Pupils say they feel safe in the

playground and that there is very little bullying. Sensible behaviour and movement around the school helps to keep accidents at bay. Older pupils show their growing maturity through helping with duties such as the supervision of playtimes and setting out chairs in preparation for assemblies. Pupils are increasing their involvement in the local community through helping with the organisation and running of local events.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching and learning are inadequate. The school's evaluation that it is good is at odds with the evidence of inspection and the achievement and progress of pupils. There are too many lessons where pupils do not learn enough. Many lessons are characterised by low expectations, slow pace and a lack of clarity in what teachers expect pupils to learn. In many classes, marking of work is irregular and rarely accompanied by helpful comments to help pupils improve their work. Some pupils themselves describe lessons as dull. A lot of work involves filling in worksheets. When Year 4 pupils were asked if they did many experiments in science most pupils said 'no', but one added that she thought they were going to do one next year. Teaching in the Reception class does not pay enough attention to the ways pupils learn through experience, experiment and play. There are examples of good teaching for others to learn from. The teaching of the current Year 6 sets a good standard. Here there is energy and enthusiasm, a clear vision of expected outcomes and good checking of what pupils are learning and remembering so that subsequent lessons can build on this.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It achieves a suitable balance between the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and personal, social, health and citizenship education. Planning does not sufficiently identify how different subjects can contribute to the promotion of basic skills, particularly numeracy. The recent addition of Spanish is one way in which the curriculum is enriched. A good programme of visits and visitors also adds interest and enjoyment to the timetable.

Recent improvements have corrected imbalances between the nationally set areas of learning for the Foundation Stage. This has addressed weaknesses in communication and mathematics, but the Reception class curriculum is still not good enough. Little use is made of outdoor areas as a valuable learning environment. Many activities are not planned to ensure that pupils are learning as well as playing.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The pastoral care of pupils is stronger than the educational support and guidance they receive. Minor weaknesses in health and safety and care procedures were brought to the attention of the school but parents are justified in feeling that their children are safe and cared for. Adults working with children are carefully checked and the school is kept secure.

Many learners do not have a clear understanding of the progress they are making. Short periods at the end of lessons are not well enough used to check what pupils have learned and remembered. Marking of pupils' work frequently misses opportunities to help them improve it. The comment, 'very untidy but some good points,' for instance, gave a pupil no guidance as to what it was he was doing well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leadership, management and governance are inadequate. There have been successes in raising staff morale and improving pupils' behaviour but achievement and standards are in decline.

The pupils' performance in mathematics paints a vivid picture of the failings of leadership, management and governance. The subject was a priority for improvement in the school's improvement plan for 2004-5 but the action taken did not work and standards slipped to their lowest level in recent years in

2005-6. Despite this, mathematics is not a key priority for improvement in the current plan, there has been little monitoring or evaluation of teaching and some staff are neither aware of the fact that standards are low nor even of who the subject leader is.

The governing body is not doing enough to evaluate the school's performance. It has rightly recognised the improvements in the atmosphere of the school and the morale of staff, but there is less attention paid to, or questions raised about, the lack of pupils' progress. Self-evaluation lacks rigour and, as a consequence, the effectiveness of every aspect of the school's work is overestimated. Until this is addressed the school does not have the capacity to improve without substantial support.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Great Marsden St John's Church of England Primary School

Trent Road

Nelson

Lancashire

BB9 0NX

13 November 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school. We thought you were polite and well behaved and we enjoyed talking to you at break and in some lessons. It was reassuring to hear from you that you feel safe and like coming to school, but at the same time we were worried that some of you find lessons dull. We have to say that we think you've got a pretty good idea of the best and worst things about your school.

We recognised that school is a much happier place than it was a while ago, probably because your behaviour has become so much better, but we were concerned that you don't make enough progress in your schoolwork, especially in mathematics. We hope that you will all work even harder, with your teachers, to get better results. It's not just learning though, we've asked staff to keep a closer check on everything in school so that they can be surer about how good it is.

We think your school needs extra help to make the improvements that are needed and inspectors will make further visits to check that everything is going to plan.

We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Alastair Younger (Lead inspector)