



Inspection Report

**Better
education
and care**

Unique Reference Number 119505
LEA Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number 294779
Inspection dates 27 June 2006 to 28 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Shirley Herring

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Withers Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Blackburn
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Lancashire, BB1 1ED
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01254 291250
Number on roll	267	Fax number	01254 291251
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Rev Andrew Raynes
Date of previous inspection	1 January 2001	Headteacher	Mr Peter Neal

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 27 June 2006 - 28 June 2006	Inspection number 294779
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St. Matthews is a slightly larger than average primary school serving an area of high social deprivation. Approximately 59% of pupils are of Pakistani origin, 33% of Indian origin and 6% are from a White British background. The home language of most pupils is not English. A high proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and statements of special educational needs. Children's attainment on entry is very low, particularly in English language and social skills. There has been a temporary headteacher in post for 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

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to standards and achievement in Key Stage 2 and in the leadership and management of the school. It provides unsatisfactory value for money.

Major disruptions to the leadership and management of the school have hampered its improvement since the last inspection. Although leadership and management of the school are inadequate overall, the acting headteacher has successfully re-established staff morale and made good improvements to the learning environment so the school is a warm and welcoming place.. The governing body's plans to appoint a permanent headteacher and deputy headteacher and establish an effective senior management team are being implemented.

The school's evaluation of its work is accurate in most respects. Recent actions are bringing about improvements and demonstrate the school has the capacity to improve further. Effective monitoring of the work of the school by the acting headteacher, with good support from the local authority, has begun to have a positive impact on pupils' progress and on the quality of teaching. The appointment of a skilled manager for the younger classes has also brought about improvements for the children in the Reception year and Key Stage 1, through effective teaching and better use of assessment information. As a result these children are now making good progress, though standards are below average. Good improvement in mathematics in Year 2 has also been sustained over the past two years.

Standards and achievement are inadequate in Key Stage 2, particularly in mathematics. Lesson planning has recently improved and the teaching is now satisfactory overall with sufficient that is good to bring about some of the necessary improvements. However, the teaching does not always challenge the more able pupils and expectations for the older pupils in this key stage are too low. As a consequence, the pupils do not always make the progress they should.

Personal development is satisfactory, although, despite the school's good efforts, attendance remains below average. The school's work with parents and initiatives such as the breakfast club, have improved attendance slightly, but it is still below average. The curriculum overall is satisfactory but it is good in the Foundation Stage because of the range of practical activities which support the children's learning so well. Bilingual support is a strength of the school and supports the pupils' learning effectively.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement plans to establish an effective and permanent senior management team, with a particular view to strengthening leadership in Key Stage 2.
- Improve the teaching in Key Stage 2 so that all pupils make the progress of which they are capable, especially in mathematics.

- Work with parents to improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Children's attainment on entry to school is very low, particularly in English language and social skills. Good teaching, including effective bilingual support, helps children to make good progress in Reception, particularly in communication, language and literacy, and in their social skills. They achieve well. Nevertheless their attainments are generally well below average as they enter Year 1.

In the 2005 national tests in Year 2, standards were well below average in reading and writing, which was satisfactory achievement overall from a low base. The greater emphasis on practical activities and on using and applying skills has led to a significant improvement in the number of pupils reaching the expected level in mathematics and although standards were below average, the pupils' achievement was good overall. Teacher assessments for the current Year 2 pupils indicate the good improvement in mathematics has been maintained and there has been some improvement in writing, though reading has remained the same. Pupils are now making good progress in Key Stage 1 as a result of the effective teaching.

Standards and achievement are inadequate in Key Stage 2, with a particular weakness in mathematics. In the 2005 national tests in Year 6, standards were well below average in English, mathematics and science. Few of the pupils reached the higher levels of attainment in English or science and no pupil attained the higher level in mathematics. The school was in the lowest 1% of schools nationally for adding value to pupils' attainment from Year 2, demonstrating the significant underachievement. From a position where the pupils were clearly making inadequate progress, improvements in the quality of teaching are starting to have an impact. Nevertheless, some older pupils and potentially higher attaining pupils still do not make enough progress.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because they receive good additional support. Effective bilingual support also ensures that the pupils whose home language is not English make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory and pupils enjoy coming to school. They generally behave well, and parents feel that any issues such as bullying are dealt with quickly. In lessons where work does not challenge pupils enough, behaviour is not as good as it should be. Pupils become restless and this affects their concentration and learning. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The school has made effective use of its 125th Anniversary to carry out some good local studies based on the history of the school and provides opportunities to celebrate the diverse cultural backgrounds of its current pupils.

Sensitive induction procedures ensure the youngest pupils settle quickly and happily into school life. Good links with the local high schools enable pupils to move confidently to the next stage of their education. Pupils understand the importance of a healthy diet. They participate eagerly in physical activities and have plenty of space and equipment for playing outside. The school is a safe environment and pupils feel confident to approach an adult if they have any problems. They work cooperatively as school councillors and learn to accept responsibility, but their academic achievements do not satisfactorily prepare them for future life.

The school's good efforts have led to some improvement in attendance, though this is still below average. The school's initiatives in working with parents and in introducing a Breakfast Club have had some effect on attendance, but a significant number of families continue to take extended holidays in term time. The school has introduced study packs to help pupils to try to maintain some continuity of learning during these long periods of absence.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and some examples of good teaching were seen, particularly in the Reception year and in Key Stage 1. In these younger classes, the sustained good teaching is leading to a steady improvement in standards. Teaching in Key Stage 2 is becoming satisfactory.

Actions taken by the acting headteacher and local authority are resulting in better learning in all classes, but especially in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Most classrooms are bright and attractive with vibrant displays, prompting the pupils to think more about their learning. A great deal of work has improved the way teachers plan their lessons throughout the school to include a variety of methods such as practical activities and drama to develop pupils' experiences and understanding. Teachers are beginning to use the new assessment systems systematically to monitor the pupils' progress and plan the next stage of their learning. Despite these improvements, expectations of the older pupils in Key Stage 2 are not high enough and the more able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.

The classroom assistants provide skilled support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers also make good use of classroom assistants' bilingual skills to help pupils who are at an early stage of learning English.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum that is broad and balanced and provides pupils with an interesting range of activities. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are given strong priority and this has resulted in improvements in Key Stage 1, particularly in mathematics.

The school is beginning to adapt the curriculum to provide greater links between subjects; for example, by teaching literacy skills through drama and writing reports in science. A range of initiatives has also been introduced to help raise standards in literacy and numeracy which focus on basic skills and have proved successful with the youngest pupils. However, it is taking longer for the varied strategies to have the same impact at Key Stage 2. The school is well resourced in all subjects and staff make good use of practical materials to support learning in lessons.

The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good. It is strongly based on practical activities, which meet the needs of young children well. The school rightly places great emphasis on developing the identified weaknesses in English language and social skills so the children make good progress.

Pupils say they like the after school clubs, especially the sports clubs. The school plans a good range of visitors to add interest to the curriculum and makes good use of local facilities such as the Cathedral, museum and the canal.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. The staff know the pupils and their families well. Good relationships between school and parents help pupils to feel secure and happy in school. The school successfully reaches out to provide learning opportunities for parents, with good bilingual support, and this has a good impact on pupils' English language development. Effective support is also provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

All child protection procedures are fully in place and checks and risk assessments are rigorously applied to keep pupils safe. The school makes full use of outside professionals to provide additional support where needed.

Many teachers are beginning to make use of the good assessment information which is available so that pupils know what they need to do to improve. However, in Key Stage 2, some teachers do not use this information well enough to ensure that all pupils are sufficiently challenged to do as well as they can.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Major disruptions to the leadership and management of the school over a considerable period have resulted in inadequate improvement and overall the quality of leadership and management is unsatisfactory. Since the retirement of the previous headteacher in 2003, there has been an acting headteacher. The local authority has provided a school improvement teacher to assist the school as acting deputy headteacher. This arrangement is reviewed each term. The acting headteacher was given the task of rebuilding staff morale after a significant period of staff conflict and in this he has been successful. All members of staff are now part of a cohesive team and

improvements to the learning environment have helped to make the school a happy and welcoming place.

However, leadership tasks such as monitoring lessons were restricted until the confidence of staff was restored. The recent introduction of monitoring of lessons by the acting headteacher, well supported by the local authority, is now bringing about improvements in teaching. However, the long gap in evaluating this aspect of the school's work has led to inadequate improvement in standards and achievement, particularly in Key Stage 2. The school now has an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for development as the school's self-evaluation was accurate in most respects. Improvement planning addresses the most pressing priorities and there is a common understanding about how these are to be achieved. These plans and recent successes demonstrate that the school has the capacity to improve.

The middle managers of the school are providing sound leadership in developing the curriculum. They are working closely with a skilled improvement teacher to develop and implement improved systems to assess and track pupils' progress. There is also good leadership in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 that is bringing about improvements in provision for children in the Reception class, and in standards in Key Stage 1, particularly in mathematics. Gradually, the impact of developments is filtering into Key Stage 2, but here leadership is less incisive in implementing actions to raise standards.

The governing body has not acted quickly enough to resolve the leadership and management issues facing the school. Uncertainty has continued for too long, although action is being taken to remedy this.

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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?	4	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	4	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	NA

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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?	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	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

Alexandra House

33 Kingsway

London

WC2B 6SE

T 0207 421 6800

F 0207 421 6707

Ofsted helpline

08456 404045

To the pupils of:

St Matthew's Church of England Primary School

Withers Street

Blackburn

Lancashire

BB1 1ED

27 June 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making Mrs McArthur and myself so welcome when we inspected your school recently. You were very polite and friendly.

Many of the teachers plan interesting lessons that you enjoy. However, sometimes there is not enough challenge for those of you who find learning easier. We have asked the teachers to make sure that there is always enough work to make even the quickest workers think hard.

Those of you who are in Reception and Key Stage 1 are doing well, but we think that, in Key Stage 2, some of you could do better, particularly in mathematics. I hope that you will help by working hard. Most of you are well behaved and get on quickly with your work. Occasionally some of you do not listen well enough to the teacher and this slows down the lesson.

I know you like school, because you told us so, and we hope that you continue to do your best to make sure you come to school every day.

Good luck to you all.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Shirley Herring

Lead Inspector