

St Matthew's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119505
Local Authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	298573
Inspection dates	18–19 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Joe Clark

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 on roll	
School	266
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Andrew Raynes
Headteacher	Mrs Elaine Smith
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2006
School address	Withers Street Blackburn Lancashire BB1 1ED
Telephone number	01254 291250
Fax number	01254 676031

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Matthews is a slightly larger than average primary school serving an area of high social and economic deprivation. Four out of five pupils are of Indian or Pakistani origin and most do not have English as their home language. A high proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Skills on entry to the school are low, particularly in communication skills and social skills. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in January 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Matthews provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. It is a rapidly improving school which has made good progress in key areas in the last twelve months and has good capacity for further improvement. It provides satisfactory value for money. Consequently, in accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The school has made good improvement because the headteacher, with the active support of the whole staff, has tackled the weaknesses identified in the previous report with a clear focus and determination. Monitoring and evaluation systems are much more robust and the school's analysis of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate. From a starting point of low standards on entry to the school, particularly in English, pupils reach standards at the end of Key Stage 2 which are below average overall, but with boys' standards being broadly average and those of girls below average. Boys are achieving well; girls' achievement is satisfactory. All groups of pupils are making faster progress than they were a year ago. Pupils who start off with poor English skills make rapid progress in catching up, mainly because of the good and often excellent support they receive from classroom assistants. The support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive is good and they make satisfactory progress in their academic work. More pupils are making better progress because more are attending school regularly. Attendance has improved rapidly in the last year, moving from below average and inadequate to slightly above average and satisfactory. This is a reflection of the good management systems for improving attendance being applied by the new leadership team.

Pupils are making faster progress because teaching and learning have improved. The inadequate teaching identified previously has been eradicated. Leaders and managers have improved the quality of lessons through effective monitoring, intervention and support. Teaching is now satisfactory and much of it is good. Children learn increasingly well, not only because of more effective teaching but also because of the positive attitudes they bring to their work. Pupils' personal development is good. Behaviour is good and pupils mix well together. They enjoy coming to school where they feel safe and are well cared for, receiving excellent pastoral support. Links with other agencies effectively support pupils' learning. Pupils believe their views are valued. Year 6 pupils told inspectors: 'We are listened to and we do make a difference. We helped to change the school uniform, and get a healthy tuck-shop set up'.

Children understand the importance of staying safe and trying to live a healthy lifestyle. Boys leave school with good basic skills in English and mathematics which, combined with their good social and personal skills, promises well for their future economic well-being. Girls' below average basic skills and their lack of assertiveness is a barrier to their achieving success in the workplace. The curriculum is satisfactory. There is an increasing focus on developing basic skills but curriculum planning does not ensure all groups of pupils receive the support they need. Assessment and tracking systems recently introduced are helping promote pupils' better progress. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the new headteacher. One parent's comment was typical of many: 'My children now enjoy school and work much harder.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage is good. Children enjoy school and settle well into the routines. Assessment shows that standards on entry are well below that most frequently found for children of the same age nationally. Leadership and management of the curriculum, the environment for learning and the involvement of parents is good. All adults have a good understanding of how young children learn and are well informed about all of the required areas of learning. They maintain records of achievement for each child in a practical and informative way so that work is matched to individual needs. As a result of good teaching, achievement and progress are good. Progress is best in the area of personal and emotional development and in communication, language and literacy skills, although only a few children attain at the expected level by the end of Reception. Children's mathematical development is organised well with positive results. Whilst children's knowledge and understanding of the world remain at a level below that expected, overall their development in creative and physical awareness is close to the expected level.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop and implement whole-school strategies for raising the achievement and aspirations of girls.
- Ensure curriculum planning provides sufficient support for all groups of pupils.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Although standards are below average by Years 2 and 6, children's achievement is satisfactory. Children join the school with low standards, especially in their use of English to communicate and express themselves. Until recently they made inadequate progress, particularly from Years 3 to 6. The latest set of published results in national tests, in 2006, indicates that pupils had been underachieving for several years with few attaining the standards they were capable of. The unvalidated 2007 national test results for the end of Year 6 were below average, but with a significant difference between boys and girls. Boys achieved average results and girls well below average. Given their low standards on entry, boys' achievement was good and that of girls was satisfactory. Evidence from the inspection, including that from lesson observations, a scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's own tracking data, indicates that the progress of all pupils in the school is accelerating and that the downward trend in both standards and achievement seen in previous years has been reversed. All groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those who start off with poor communication or social skills, are now making at least satisfactory progress and some are making good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In lessons, all children have positive attitudes to learning, listen attentively to their teachers and show respect to all the adults in the classroom. Higher up the school, boys show a greater willingness than girls to put

themselves forward in answering questions or taking on leadership roles. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They say that, since the new headteacher arrived, they feel much safer because behaviour has greatly improved and there is zero tolerance of bullying behaviour. They learn how to exercise responsibility, for example as members of the school council where their views often influence decisions. They make a good contribution to the local community, particularly through their links with local mosques and churches. Pupils understand the advantages of a healthy lifestyle through sensible diet and the value of keeping fit through regular exercise. Boys' develop good basic skills especially in mathematics, which helps equip them well for life in the workplace. Girls' basic skills are underdeveloped, which, allied to their lack of assertiveness in lessons, means that they are less well-prepared for their future economic well being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

In many classes, teachers differentiate their planning effectively to take account of the different ability and/or age groups in the class. In these lessons, teaching is good and pupils make good progress. In some lessons, although the tasks set are interesting and engaging, they do not take sufficient account of what pupils already know and can do, are not challenging enough, and so progress is only satisfactory. Planning rarely identifies strategies to ensure girls make an equal contribution to boys. In all lessons, relationships with pupils are supportive and encouraging, and motivate pupils to want to learn. Good and often excellent support is provided by classroom assistants who use their initiative positively to sustain and enhance pupils' learning. This support is excellent when assistants are used effectively by teachers to help assess at the end of the lesson how much progress in learning pupils have made. Good support for pupils with learning difficulties and those with disabilities helps them to progress and learn well. The marking of pupils' work is often good with clear advice to pupils on how to improve. This is not yet consistent in all classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum gives appropriate priority to developing crucial skills through literacy and numeracy lessons. In other lessons, pupils get few opportunities to use and apply their basic skills of English and mathematics. There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who need additional support in learning English. The needs of other groups of pupils, for example, girls and higher attaining pupils, are not deliberately planned for and the curriculum does not fully support the achievement of these groups of pupils. Enrichment activities, mainly sport, support pupils' learning but pupils say there are not enough non-sporting opportunities. There are good transition links with local nurseries and high schools but few curriculum links.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Overall care, guidance and support is good with the pastoral support of pupils being outstanding. All adults in the school demonstrate a caring and compassionate approach to pupils, particularly vulnerable children and those with severe physical and emotional disabilities. Good links with other agencies ensure children receive appropriate support when needed, for example, in the

early stages of learning English. Support for improving attendance has been very effective. Thorough procedures are in place to safeguard children and the requirements of current legislation are scrupulously observed. Academic guidance is satisfactory. New systems of personal targets, both curriculum and end of key stage national curriculum levels are bedding in well, but have not had time yet to demonstrate a positive impact on pupils' achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and deputy headteacher, with the senior leadership team, have galvanised and re-energised the school. The headteacher has given a clear direction and focus to the school's work and already there are indications of real improvement. Attendance has dramatically improved and pupils' progress is accelerating. The decline in national test results seen in recent years has been reversed. For the first time, challenging targets are being met. New and more effective systems of monitoring and evaluating the school's work have been introduced. The school's strengths and weaknesses have been accurately identified by the senior leadership team and systems of self-evaluation are robust. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the changes recently introduced and have expressed great confidence in the headteacher. They appreciate the Parent Classes. Governance is satisfactory. Although key aspects of the school's work have dramatically improved, these have not been sustained long enough for leadership and management to be judged good.

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Annex A

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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	2

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

20 September 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Matthew's Church of England Primary School, Blackburn, BB1 1ED

Thank you so much for your warm welcome when we visited your school recently. We really appreciated the help you gave us and the interesting things you told us about your school. We enjoyed your assembly and were impressed by how much you know about the Five Pillars of Islam. We enjoyed talking to you. This is what we thought about your school.

Your school has improved a lot in the last year. There is now nothing of major importance that is less than satisfactory. Many things are good. Your teachers and other adult helpers take fantastic care of you. Your own behaviour and attitudes are good and your attendance is now average. You are learning better because your teachers have become better at helping you learn. Boys are making the best progress seen in the school for several years, but the girls are lagging behind and need to catch up as soon as possible. We'd like the school to come up with ways to make this happen.

The school has improved because your new headteacher is a very good headteacher who is working hard to make St Matthews a good school and one you can be proud of. With your continued hard work and co-operation we are sure you will get there soon.

Thank you once again for all your help. Good luck for the future.

Joe Clark (Lead Inspector), Heather Evans, David Edwards