

St Stephen's Tockholes Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119459
Local Authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	313302
Inspection dates	5–6 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Shirley Herring

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	39
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Stuart Taylor
Headteacher	Mrs Barbara Cocken
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2003
School address	Rock Lane Tockholes Darwen Lancashire BB3 0LX
Telephone number	01254 701806
Fax number	01254 762357

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector

Description of the school

This is a small school and all pupils are taught in mixed age classes. It takes pupils from a variety of social and economic backgrounds, not only from the village but also further afield. All pupils are from a White British background and the number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The proportion entitled to free school meals is below average. A higher number of pupils than is usual start and leave the school other than at the normal times. There are close links with the church and parish and the school accepts students for initial teacher training.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where parents feel confident that their children thrive in a 'supportive and encouraging' environment. Influenced by the school's Christian tradition, pupils' personal development is good and they behave well. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and are keen to explore the attractive grounds. They feel safe because everyone gets on well with each other and they are confident that any rare problems are sorted out quickly. They are developing a good understanding of a healthy lifestyle through regular exercise and good quality, healthy food at lunchtime. They make a good contribution to the community by taking responsibilities in school and by participating in village activities such as the switching on of the Christmas lights. They have good opportunities to work together to prepare them well for the future. For example, pupils in Key Stage 1 worked in groups and took on the roles of gathering resources or chairing discussions when learning about light in science. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. However, despite some efforts to develop links with a school in a different locality, pupils are not yet suitably prepared for life in a culturally diverse society.

Pupils make good progress overall during their time in school and the majority of pupils achieve well. They enter the Reception class with skills that are broadly typical for their age and achieve standards in English and mathematics which are generally above average by the time they leave Year 6.

In the 2007 national assessments in Year 2 results were broadly average. Pupils made sound progress but more able pupils did not achieve as well as they could in reading, mathematics and science. In the 2007 national tests in Year 6 standards were above average in English and mathematics with an above average proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels. In science, however, some more able pupils did not achieve as well as they could. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive very good support and their achievement is good.

Teaching is good overall. Mixed age classes are generally well managed and most pupils achieve well. In some lessons, such as science, however, more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged and so they do not achieve as well as they can.

The emphasis on literacy and numeracy within a good curriculum has enabled pupils to reach a good standard in basic skills. The strong curriculum for personal, social and health education supports pupils' personal development. The level of care, guidance and support is good. Skilled teaching assistants are used effectively to provide good support in mixed age classes and for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Work is well marked and pupils receive good guidance to help them improve. The school has established links with other agencies to provide specialist support when needed.

The school is led and managed well. The governing body give valued support to the headteacher. Decisions on allocation of funds are fully discussed and evaluated. The decision to employ specialist staff has led to an improvement in provision for music and Spanish.

The school demonstrates a sound capacity to improve. The school improvement plan clearly identifies areas for improvement. However, it has its limitations, as it lasts for just one year. The headteacher is aware of this and is currently seeking the views of staff, pupils, parents and governors in order to produce a longer term, more strategic plan for improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. Children enter the Reception class with a range of skills that are broadly typical for their age. They make good progress because of good teaching, based on purposeful practical activities which show a good understanding of how young children learn. By the time they enter Year 1 most children have reached or exceeded the nationally recommended goals. As numbers are small, children are in a class with Year 1 and Year 2 pupils. However, the teacher is well supported by suitably trained staff so that Reception children experience a good range of activities that are appropriate to their age. The good induction arrangements before children start school, the emphasis on developing personal and social skills and the good example of older pupils all help children settle quickly and develop good attitudes to school from an early age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievement of more able pupils in reading and mathematics in Key Stage 1 and in science throughout the school.
- Ensure learning activities in lessons provide sufficient challenge.
- Provide more opportunities to prepare pupils for life in a culturally diverse society.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

In this small school it is difficult to make comparisons of standards from year to year. However, the school's records of assessments for individuals show that pupils make good progress during their time in school.

Pupils make steady progress in Key Stage 1 and reach broadly average standards. . More able pupils achieve well in writing but satisfactorily in reading, mathematics and science. This is because these pupils are not always suitably challenged.

By the end of Year 6 standards are generally above average in English and mathematics and pupils achieve well, including more able pupils. This is due in part to the close attention pupils receive in the mornings when pupils are taught in smaller groups for these subjects. Standards in science were average and more able pupils do not achieve as well as they can. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive very good support and they achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils respond well to the Christian values that underpin the school's work. They work well together and their behaviour is good. One parent remarked on the 'wonderful personal confidence' displayed by the pupils. Spiritual, moral and social development is good. However, despite past efforts by the school, the pupils who are all White British, are not fully prepared for life in a culturally diverse society.

Pupils say they enjoy school and particularly the opportunities to use the school's extensive grounds for sports and other activities. They feel safe because everyone is friendly. If there is a problem they are clear it can be quickly sorted out by themselves or by talking to an adult. Pupils really appreciate the introduction of healthy lunches which is also shown by those who bring their own packed lunch. Pupils' contribution to the community is developing quickly.

There are close links with the church where they enjoy participating in services such as Christingle and they invite village residents to the Christmas productions. In school they take on responsibilities as Road Officers and some are currently organising a disco for fellow pupils. Pupils' good level of literacy and numeracy skills and the opportunities to work together prepare them well for the future. Pupils concentrate well in class and participate in practical activities enthusiastically. However, work in their books is sometimes untidy. Attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall. Mixed age classes are well managed and pupils learn well. In all lessons there is a good emphasis on the school's priority on developing speaking and listening skills, which is also helping to improve their writing. This was seen in Key Stage 1 when pupils were required to record and listen to their sentence and make improvements before writing it down. However, in some lessons, for example in science, tasks are too directed so that more able pupils are not suitably challenged to enable them to achieve as well as they can. The school's decision to deploy the skilled support staff to specific classes has fostered good teamwork and helped to improve learning, particularly for lower attaining pupils. Marking is generally useful in helping pupils to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good overall. There is a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy, in specific lessons and in other subjects, which enables pupils to achieve a good standard. Whilst there is appropriate coverage of the science curriculum overall, there can be long gaps before revisiting an aspect, particularly in Key Stage 1, so pupils can find it difficult to remember and make links with previous learning. Work is well planned to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, so they achieve well. There are good opportunities for pupils to use and develop skills in information and communication technology across the curriculum. The school benefits from the contribution of skilled volunteers to enhance its provision and provide an extensive range of additional activities to promote health and enjoyment. The decision by the school to employ a part-time music teacher has enriched the creative curriculum. The strong provision for personal, social and health education has had a good impact on pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a good level of care, guidance and support. Parents are overwhelmingly appreciative of the individual attention the school provides. Several parents commented that pupils who had experienced some difficulty in the past in other schools, settled quickly into the supportive atmosphere at St Stephen's. Governors work with the headteacher in ensuring that all the recommended procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place and rigorously applied. Skilled teaching assistants are used effectively to provide good support in mixed age classes and for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The use of support to challenge more able pupils is not so well developed. Regular assessments are used well to set individual

targets so pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve. This has contributed to their good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is led and managed well. There is a strong sense of teamwork in this small school; for example, staff plan the curriculum together under the clear leadership of the headteacher. The school's accurate evaluation of its work is used well to plan improvements so that pupils can reach challenging targets. The focus on writing since the last inspection has helped to raise standards. The school has recently identified science as an area for development, though actions to improve standards are not yet fully developed. The governing body has a good understanding of the needs of the school and provides good support for the headteacher. For example, the budgetary implications for employing a specialist music teacher were fully discussed, agreed and evaluated and have been effective in enriching the curriculum and learning. The school provides good value for money.

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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?	2
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	3

Achievement and standards

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

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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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?	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

7 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Stephen's Tockholes Church of England Primary School, Blackburn with Darwen, BB3 0LX

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. I was sorry I missed those pupils who were rehearsing their drumming with other schools. Good luck with the performance. I enjoyed talking to you all in class and in groups. You told me how much you enjoy school because everyone is so friendly. I can understand why you like sports and other activities in the beautiful school grounds.

I agree with you and your parents that St Stephen's is a good school. It takes good care of you all and gives you good help and support when you need it. You play your part by working hard and behaving well.

Teaching is good and so you learn quickly. Teachers mark your work thoroughly and make good suggestions to help you to improve. This helps you to make good progress in school so that you reach standards that are better than average in English and mathematics by the time you leave Year 6.

To make things even better I have asked the school to plan more challenging tasks for those pupils who can work more quickly, particularly in science. I would also like you to have the chance to learn more about different cultures.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Herring

Lead inspector