

Baxenden St Johns Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119440
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	327035
Inspection dates	30–31 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Lynne Read

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	209
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Neil Howarth
Headteacher	Mrs Kathryn Adnitt
Date of previous school inspection	29 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Church Avenue Baxenden Accrington Lancashire BB5 2RQ

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	30–31 March 2009
Inspection number	327035

Telephone number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This average-sized primary school serves the local parish. The social and economic circumstances of families are mixed. The proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is below average. Most of the school population have White British backgrounds and around 3% are of minority ethnic heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Baxenden St John's Church of England Primary is a satisfactory school. Pupils' personal development is good. Value for money is satisfactory. Parents have confidence in the school and say it is 'a great environment for learning and a caring school'. Good links with other schools, agencies and the church provide many benefits for pupils' personal and learning needs. For example, pupils enjoy support for learning in technology and physical education from secondary schools. Involvement in local projects and combined school-church events promote a sense of citizenship among the pupils and contribute to effective community cohesion.

The school has been striving to raise achievement. With more accurate tracking of pupils' progress and additional group work, there are now indications that pupils' progress is beginning to accelerate. From an above average starting point, pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Achievement is good in reading. Standards are above average by Year 6 but too few of the more able pupils make the expected progress through Key Stage 2. While the proportion of pupils attaining the average level in English and mathematics is good, the numbers attaining the higher level fall short of the national average and the school's own targets. In English, reading is a strength but writing is weaker.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good in reading and for pupils who have learning or emotional difficulties. A new approach to the teaching of writing is beginning to have some success. This is a recent initiative, however, and has not yet made a significant impact on standards across the year groups. Teachers' expectations of pupils have been increased leading them to move learning on at a faster pace. However, the element of challenge is not always sufficient to ensure that pupils fulfil their potential. The curriculum is satisfactory, with a good range of enhancements, such as visits and clubs. Learning includes a strong emphasis on personal, social and health education. The Healthy Schools Award recognises the good work done to help pupils live safe and healthy lives.

Pupils' personal development, including behaviour, is good. Adults provide a secure environment and pupils say they enjoy learning. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community. For example, the school council members ensure that pupils' views are known and 'play pals' help to make playtimes run smoothly. Such experience of responsibility prepares pupils soundly for life in the wider world.

The headteacher and senior leaders have a satisfactory overview of provision and standards, but the monitoring of new initiatives is not effective enough to ensure that these are implemented consistently and are having the desired impact. Nevertheless, some good outcomes are now emerging from changes made. With these initial successes, the senior leadership team are eager to move on and there is sound capacity for the school to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning in the Reception class are good. Parents praise the provision and one wrote 'My child's first experience of school life has been extremely positive'. Children's skills and knowledge on entry to Reception vary widely. For the past two years, they have been typical for the age group, although records show they were higher in previous years. Children's progress is assessed regularly and tasks are planned very effectively to build on children's developing knowledge and skills. As a result, the children make good progress. An increased

emphasis on learning about sounds and letters this year has led to very good progress in early reading and writing. Those children leaving the Reception Year in 2008 exceeded the level expected for their age and the current year group are on target to do so.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is led well. For example, a good programme of introducing children to school enables them to settle quickly. Learning includes opportunities for independent exploration and for children to follow their own interests. The staff make good use of the school field to promote learning and children experience a variety of physical challenges. However, for reasons of space and security, children do not have continuous access to outdoor activities. Good quality care and support for children's well-being ensure that behaviour is good and that they are well-versed in class routines. The children enjoy their work and their overall personal development is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the achievement of the more able pupils in writing and mathematics.
- Ensure that teaching is more consistently challenging for pupils, especially those who are more able.
- Inject more rigour into monitoring procedures to ensure that initiatives are implemented consistently and that all pupils are achieving their best.

A small proportion of 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

Achievement is satisfactory overall; it is good in reading and for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils' attainment is above what is typical when they enter Year 1 and standards are above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. However, the school recognises that there are inconsistencies in pupils' progress and the more able sometimes do not make the progress expected across Years 3 to 6. In 2008, the school met its own targets for attainment at Level 4 but missed those at the higher Level 5 in mathematics and English. While reading was strong, writing was weaker.

Managers have taken action to increase pupils' progress. New systems for checking pupils' progress enable teachers to intervene and boost learning where needed. New teaching methods for writing are helping to improve progress for the older pupils and plans are in place to extend these across Years 3 to 6. In mathematics, pupils have sound skills of calculation but problem solving and investigation work are not always featured strongly enough in their work, especially for pupils who are more able. Pupils with learning or emotional difficulties make good progress. A recent focus on promoting boys' learning is proving successful, so they are now making equal progress to the girls.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are polite, friendly and enjoy school. They are unanimous in their support for the 'Good to be Green' behaviour initiative, which helps lessons to run smoothly and promotes a calm, harmonious atmosphere. Very occasional incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly so pupils feel safe and secure. Attendance is above average.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good and supported well through links with the church. Pupils respond well to the reflective atmosphere of worship and value the varied opportunities to discuss personal issues or learn about healthy life styles. Older pupils are good role models for younger ones and arrangements such as family seating at lunchtime help all ages to enjoy each other's company. While pupils enjoy meeting visitors from other countries, their understanding of the diverse cultures within Britain is limited.

Pupils take fundraising activities very seriously and develop skills as responsible citizens in organising events such as the very popular fashion show for Eco-week. Current levels of attainment provide a sound basis for pupils' secondary education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching has a satisfactory impact on learning overall. Some outstanding practice was seen during the inspection and pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support. Relationships in lessons are good and so pupils develop good attitudes to learning and a willingness to persevere with tasks. Well-informed and experienced teaching assistants provide effective support in helping pupils to succeed, especially in the 'booster' classes.

Many worthwhile improvements have been made in teaching to improve the proportion of good practice. However, they are not all embedded consistently. In some classes, the work is planned carefully to promote progress for pupils of all abilities. However, in some lessons at Key Stage 2, pupils are not stretched fully. In many whole-class sessions, teachers include short challenges so that pupils are actively engaged in learning. However, pupils sometimes listen passively to the teacher for too long. Marking of pupils' writing includes useful advice for pupils about how well they have done and how they can improve further. In mathematics, marking is not always as helpful as it could be. Across school, pupils are increasingly encouraged to be independent learners by evaluating their own progress and setting the next steps for their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory, with a good range of enrichment activities. Teachers have made a start in linking subjects together so that pupils have more frequent opportunities to consolidate their reading, writing and computer skills. Projects such as the current one on 'space', successfully capture the interest of boys. However, in some classes, project work is not planned sufficiently well to meet the needs of all pupils, especially the more able.

Special teaching groups are proving successful in improving progress in English and mathematics and in supporting pupils who need extra help with their learning. Similar provision for the gifted and able pupils is at an early stage of development. The good range of school clubs offers a wide choice of activity and most pupils find something to interest them. Regular visits out of school are chosen well to broaden pupils' horizons and fire their interests. The recent Key Stage 1 trip to an aquarium, for example, led to some very good standards of writing.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This aspect is satisfactory overall and parents are highly appreciative of the pastoral care, which is good. One wrote, 'The children's needs and requirements are at the heart of everything'. Pupils' emotional development is supported well. The pupils access help easily by posting a note on the 'worry wall' or in the 'feelings box'. Visits by the community police officer and the 'Life Education Van', , for example, promote pupils' understanding of safe, healthy lifestyles. Safeguarding meets all requirements and child protection systems are well-established. Safety inspections are carried out regularly and action is taken to rectify the issues identified. However, records of this work are not filed together so it is difficult for managers and governors to check the effectiveness of the system.

There is satisfactory guidance for pupils to support their academic progress. Pupil reports include long term targets for learning. In some classes, they are shared orally with pupils and, for the oldest ones, they are recorded on a target sheet for easy reference. In many cases, however, pupils do not know about, or recall, the guidance so it has limited impact on learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. There are some strengths. The headteacher has the confidence of the staff, governors and parents and is instrumental in maintaining the caring, orderly environment. The staff work as a good team and are committed to raising standards further. New systems for assessing pupils' progress and for monitoring the quality of provision have been introduced by senior managers and are currently being refined. At present, the monitoring of classroom practice is not sufficiently rigorous and evaluations of the school's performance do not always take enough account of pupils' achievement. Nevertheless, the school knows its strengths and areas for development. School improvement planning provides a clear steer for future developments but some of the targets are not precise enough, which makes it difficult for governors to monitor progress towards the targets.

Management of the Early Years Foundation Stage and of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is effective and has resulted in good progress in these two areas. The subject manager for English has made a valuable impact on teaching and learning, leading to better progress in writing. Less input to the provision for mathematics means that improvements are slower here.

Governance is satisfactory and all statutory requirements are met. The governors are supportive and soundly informed. They bring a good level of experience and expertise to leadership and management and are keen to see the school improve.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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 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?	3

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	3
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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

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1 April 2009

Dear Pupils 1 April 2009 111

Inspection of Baxenden St John's Church of England Primary School, Lancashire. BB5 2RQ

Thank you very much for the warm, cheerful welcome and for all the help you gave my colleague and me when we came to visit your school. We had an interesting time in your company and I would like to tell you what we found out.

St John's is a caring, friendly school and it provides you with a satisfactory quality of education. Your behaviour is good. You like the 'Good to be Green' scheme because 'it has taught everyone that you have to earn trust and it helps the whole class to pull together', as one of you said. We enjoyed seeing all the stickers and awards that you have received for your hard work and thoughtfulness. You enjoy your lessons and I know you have fun because we heard lots of laughter during the two days. You say that you especially enjoy the different activities provided out of lesson time. The younger ones certainly enjoyed their trip to see underwater life and couldn't wait to write about it. The fundraising you do shows that you are kind and considerate people and that you are mindful of others who are less fortunate.

Your achievement is satisfactory and standards are above average. You make particularly good progress in your reading. Well done! However, I think some of you can do even better in writing and mathematics. Your school agrees and I have asked it to introduce ways to help you, especially those of you who find the work quite easy. I know how much you like a challenge so you should enjoy these fresh approaches. I have also asked the school to make sure that all its new ideas for your learning are as successful as possible.

Thank you once again for the interesting conversations we had and for letting us know your views so clearly. Good luck for the future and I am sure you will continue to enjoy your happy school.

Yours faithfully

Mrs L Read

Lead inspector