

Blackpool St Nicholas CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119594
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	358587
Inspection dates	04–05 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Brian Dower

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 of pupils on the school roll	322
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr Graham Piper
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Mellor
Date of previous school inspection	23 April 2008
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 16 lessons and observed the work of 10 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, four members of the governing body and with staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including monitoring and assessment records, pupils' books and files, minutes of the governing body's meetings, school improvement planning, and curriculum and lesson plans. Ninety-two questionnaire returns from parents and carers were analysed, together with a sample from pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- Attainment in pupils' writing from across the school.
- The progress and achievement of the highest-attaining pupils.
- Attendance rates.
- The use of assessments to set suitably challenging learning activities.
- The impact of information and communication technology (ICT) on pupils' learning.
- How effective the school is in enabling parents and carers to support their children's learning.

Information about the school

The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and that of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals are below average. Pupils are predominantly White British, with a very small minority from the Gypsy/Roma community. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. A small minority of pupils join the school partway through their primary education. There has been an influx of new staff recently as a result of retirements, promotions to other schools and a rising school population. The school has many awards, including Healthy Schools status, Investors in People, the Primary Quality Mark for Parental Engagement and it is on the information and communication technology (ICT) register for good practice. There are before and after-school clubs run by the governing body.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Pupils' progress and the levels at which they achieve from well below average starting points are good. Attainment is average. The quality of the work seen in lessons shows progress continues to be good. Below average attainment in writing in the past has been reversed. The standards reached by the higher-attaining pupils have risen. Outstanding work is done in relation to: promoting equal opportunities; enabling parents and carers to support their children's education; and pupils' contribution to the school and the wider community.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and inspection evidence shows this to be so. Behaviour is good. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay fit and well and they eat healthy lunches and take part in a range of physical activities. Their contribution to the school and the wider community is outstanding because of the range of responsibilities undertaken by the older pupils. In addition, all pupils' work on sustainability in the local community, they undertake extensive charitable activities and there are links with schools in this country and in Australia. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and spiritual development is good.

Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of pupils. They have created a stimulating learning environment. They make excellent use of ICT for teaching and learning. As a result, the ability of pupils to work independently at home and in school has improved significantly. Pupils make good progress because they are well cared for and receive the guidance they need on how to improve their work and for their well-being. The curriculum is matched to their needs and enrichment activities are many and varied. In the lessons seen, opportunities were sometimes missed to engage pupils in class discussions about their work. Sometimes, insufficient time was given for pupils to complete learning activities and occasionally, those activities were not sufficiently challenging for all groups.

Self-evaluation is accurate. There have been significant improvements since the previous inspection. The induction of new staff has been managed well and this, together with the way the new admissions have been integrated into the school partway through an academic year, demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - extending opportunities for pupils to engage in class discussions about their work
 - ensuring that learning activities are always sufficiently challenging for all groups in lessons
 - developing a greater awareness of when group learning activities have run their course and the class needs to move on.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy their work in lessons and are keen to do well. Pupils know what enables them to learn well. Their teaching and learning group has contributed suggestions on the methods they find motivating and these have been taken up by staff. Most pupils attend school regularly and participate in the wide range of enrichment activities. As a result, they grow in confidence and self-esteem and learn to work collaboratively and independently. Overall attendance is low but improving. It is low because the attendance of a few pupils is poor. The school is already adopting all possible means to address this and is being successful in reducing persistent absence rates.

Pupils' moral awareness is strong for their age. The younger pupils, for example, could talk about endurance and humility and relate them to everyday experiences. Pupils have a good understanding of the diversity of British society. Their spiritual development is also strong because they reflect on their relationships with others and the world around them.

Overall, the pace of learning and the rate of progress pupils are making now are good. This is so for all groups, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those few from Gypsy/Roma families and the minority who join the school partway through their primary education. However, there are occasions when the pace of learning dips. Attainment in English has improved significantly over the last year, particularly in the quality of the higher-attaining pupils' writing. Pupils have good literacy, numeracy and ICT skills and use them flexibly across subjects. Most have good communication skills for group work but discussion skills are less well developed. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage in their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

There have been significant improvements since the previous inspection in the rigour with which pupils' progress is monitored over time and in lessons, and in the quality of teachers' marking. Teachers' questioning skills are highly effective in getting pupils to reflect on and explain their learning at length. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to engage pupils in class discussions about their work. Overall, learning activities are varied and interesting. Occasionally, these activities are not matched closely enough to need and sometimes the time given for their completion is too long. The pace of learning then slackens. The good progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those from Gypsy/Roma families and those who join the school partway through their primary education is because of early identification of need and prompt and effective support from teachers and highly-skilled teaching assistants.

The well-planned curriculum is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities and by extensive partnership arrangements to broaden provision. These contribute significantly to pupils' interest in their work and their enjoyment of school. The care, guidance and support pupils receive account for the good progress that potentially vulnerable pupils make academically and in their personal development. Effective links with outside agencies support the school in this. For example, the partnership with the welfare service is successfully reducing the number of persistent absentees. The before and after-school clubs are well led and managed and provide pupils with a safe, caring and stimulating environment. They meet the Childcare Register requirements.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders, managers and staff are ambitious for the school's success. Expectations of pupils are high and good use is made of challenging performance targets to raise attainment. The strong leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, provides the direction and drive for further improvement. This is most apparent in the school's innovative approach to the use of ICT for learning. Christian values and the promotion of equal opportunities are at the heart of the school's

work. This is seen in the way new arrivals are integrated and supported, and the quick progress they make to match the achievement levels of other pupils. Rare instances of discrimination are tackled promptly and effectively. The school has a good understanding of the religious, ethnic and social characteristics of the community it serves and it has links with a range of community groups. Its work is therefore having a positive influence on community cohesion in school and beyond. Initiatives to strengthen links with families are well established, giving them the information they need to support their children in their education. The staff's responsiveness to parents and carers' concerns has resulted in the use of learning logs between home and school to improve homework. Governors are well informed and monitor the school's performance closely. They balance encouragement and support with asking the right questions. Safeguarding procedures are effective and safe working is evident in daily routines. The school gives good value for money.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall, children's skills when they start school are well below the levels expected. They make good progress overall and attainment on entry to Year 1 is below average. In their ability to link sounds and letters and in writing their progress is outstanding and they reach average standards in these skills. This is because of accurate assessment of the children's needs, the focus on basic skills with many and varied opportunities for talking, reading and writing, and the excellent monitoring and recording of progress. These records are used exceptionally well to plan imaginative and interesting activities in the classroom and outdoors. Links are made between areas of learning within these different activities. Children are excited about the day ahead as they come into school and are clearly happy and secure. They quickly become independent, show initiative and make decisions about their learning. For example, they have to choose and mix the colours they need for painting. They are interested in the differences in the lives of different groups of children in the classroom but are less aware of broader cultural diversity. The recently appointed Early Years Foundation Stage leader has a very good understanding of all aspects of provision and a clear vision for further improvements. She is ably supported by an enthusiastic team. Together they identify what needs to be done to ensure that every boy and girl's needs are catered for. For example, the provision they have put

in place to narrow the gap in writing between boys and girls has been successful. Parents and carers are involved in a variety of ways in their children's learning and appreciate the daily informal contact with staff as well as more formal meetings and workshops.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Almost all of the parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire were entirely supportive of the school and expressed appreciation of all the school does for their children. The very few concerns recorded related to individual problems and there was no pattern of dissatisfaction. The exception was six returns where parents and carers felt that unacceptable behaviour was not managed effectively. Inspectors looked at behaviour in lessons and around the school, they spoke to pupils and they examined the school's incident logs. They found that behaviour is good and that the very few pupils who find school routines difficult to adapt to are managed well and do not disrupt the learning of others.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blackpool St Nicholas CofE Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 92 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 322 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	60	65	29	32	2	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	66	72	24	26	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	40	43	41	45	6	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	50	54	36	39	1	1	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	53	58	32	35	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	49	52	37	40	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	53	58	36	39	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	48	52	32	35	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	51	55	34	37	2	2	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	47	51	34	37	7	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	43	42	46	3	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	56	61	27	29	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	63	68	22	24	2	2	1	

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring term 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



6 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blackpool St Nicholas CofE Primary School, Blackpool, FY4 5DS

Thank you for the warm welcome we received when we visited your school. We enjoyed our time with you and were impressed by how hard you are working and the way you care for and support one another. This is because you know right from wrong and show respect for others.

Yours is a good school. You make good progress in your work and reach the standards expected of young people of your age. You have the personal qualities to be successful in the future. There are a few pupils who are not well prepared for the next stage in their education because they do not attend school regularly. Most of you, however, do so and are keen to learn and benefit from all the school has to offer. That includes some outstanding things, such as the opportunities you have in contributing to make your school and the local community even better than they are. The way the school ensures that everyone has an equal chance and that your parents and carers can help you in your learning are also excellent.

You spoke enthusiastically about the many clubs and activities you participate in outside of lessons. You also told us how much you like your teachers and the teaching assistants and that they are always there for you. We agree that they work hard to give you the best possible start in your education.

There are always things to do to make your learning even better. We have asked that you be given more opportunities to discuss your work as a whole class and that all learning activities enable you to make the best possible progress. We have also asked that group learning activities do not go on for longer than necessary. This is to make the best possible use of lesson time.

Thank you again for contributing to the inspection. Our best wishes to you all.

Yours sincerely

Mr Brian Dower
Lead inspector

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