

Blackpool St John's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119595
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	395474
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2012
Lead inspector	Naomi Taylor

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Blackburn
Headteacher	Sandra Hall
Date of previous school inspection	12 December 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Naomi Taylor
Allyson Ingall

Additional Inspector
Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed eight teachers and visited 16 lessons. Pupils read to the inspectors who also attended assemblies and the graduation ceremony for the Children's University. Discussions were held with parents and carers, school staff, groups of pupils and members of the governing body. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including safeguarding documents, the school's self-evaluation and development plans, local authority evaluations, records of pupils' attainment and progress, and pupils' work. The responses to questionnaires from 48 parents and carers were analysed as were questionnaires from pupils and staff.

Information about the school

St John's is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is much lower than the national average, as is the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language. There is more than double the national average of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher than average. The mobility of pupils in and out of the school has increased significantly in recent years and is much higher than average. The school exceeds the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed and a brand new school has been built which includes Nursery provision. St John's holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Healthy School status, Artsmark silver, Eco-silver, FA Charter award, Children's University and ICAN accreditation which supports speech and language development. The school is part of the Blackpool Primary Partnership and the National College Middle Leadership Network. It is a training school for classroom assistants and teachers.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- St John's is a good school. To be outstanding the school needs to raise further the quality of teaching so that more lessons are outstanding and more pupils reach the higher levels in writing by the time they leave school. All pupils, parents and carers believe this is a 'fantastic school'.
- Achievement is good. Almost all children join St John's with skills that are well below those expected for their age. Throughout the school they make good progress. By the time they leave school almost all pupils reach broadly average levels of attainment in reading and mathematics. Writing is below average but is improving.
- Teaching is good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons have good pace and challenge which ensures that pupils really enjoy learning. There are many opportunities to learn beyond the classroom with trips that are linked to topics and this increases pupils' enjoyment of learning and broadens their experience. Occasionally, there are a few inconsistencies in teaching, including marking.
- Behaviour and safety are good and pupils support this view. They have good attitudes to learning and develop high levels of respect towards each other. Pupils enjoy coming to school; this is reflected in average and improving levels of attendance. All parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire believe that their children are safe and well looked after in school.
- The senior leadership team, all staff and the governing body are deeply committed to providing a school community which provides the opportunity for pupils to develop as individuals and reach their full academic potential. The new creative and skills-based curriculum is engaging all pupils and ensuring good spiritual, moral social and cultural development. Performance management is used effectively to continually raise the quality of teaching and learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching to further raise achievement in writing, particularly so that more pupils are reaching the higher levels at the end of Year 6, by:
 - precisely pitching learning objectives and matching tasks to meet the needs of all learners
 - ensuring greater consistency in teachers' oral and written feedback to ensure clarity in pupils' understanding of their next steps to improve their work
 - involving pupils in devising success criteria for more focused peer- and self-assessment, thereby developing their skills to check and edit their work independently.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Children settle quickly into the Early Years Foundation Stage with the help of excellent transition arrangements between school and home. The older pupils are very caring and extremely mindful of the younger children in school. In lessons, nursery and reception children mix very well together as they learn and play in the classroom and in the easily accessible outdoor area. Starting with skills that are well below those expected for their age in all areas of learning and personal development, children make outstanding progress throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. They enter Year 1 with a significant improvement in social skills and good attitudes to learning, although their skills in communication and number remain weaker.

Throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils make good progress, and some better, including those who have special educational needs. By the time they leave school, pupils reach broadly average levels of attainment in mathematics and reading. Writing is not as strong, but there is evidence of significant improvements. There has been a trend of almost a third of pupils moving in/out of the school during Key Stage 2 and this has a negative impact on attainment data. However, those pupils who join the school other than at the usual times are challenged and make good progress, whatever their starting points. Where there was evidence previously of girls' attainment being better than that of boys, the school has tackled this and the gap is closing. Similarly, those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals are now making good progress. Almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire believe that their children are making good progress and this is certainly the case.

Changes to the way reading skills are taught are having a positive impact on improving the reading abilities of children. From exceptionally low starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils make good progress in reading. They gain a good understanding of letters and sounds and this was evident when Reception children talked to an inspector. They were purposefully waving their wands and casting spells as they played outdoors. When the inspector asked a child what they

were waving she replied 'wand'. She was then able to sound out the first and last letters of 'wand' demonstrating her understanding of different letters and sounds. Key Stage 1 pupils who read to inspectors were able to use their skills to link letters and sounds to work out words with which they were unfamiliar. Although attainment in reading remains below average by the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' ability in reading by the time they leave in Year 6 is broadly average and improving. Pupils regularly visit the local library which increases their zest for reading and helps them and their families to make decisions about choosing different books to read. Older pupils recognise the importance of reading skills in ensuring that they make progress in other subjects.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is good overall. Pupils, parents and carers rightly share this view. The senior leadership team sees improving the quality of teaching and learning as having high priority and this is shared by all staff. The new skills-based curriculum has improved the engagement of all groups of pupils in learning in a range of environments both in the classroom and beyond the school. There are now more opportunities to practise writing across the curriculum and for a range of audience and this is celebrated through displays.

Where teaching is outstanding, the pace of learning is exceptionally well-matched to all levels of ability and pupils are totally immersed in learning. This was seen during a Year 6 English lesson when two boys were particularly keen to tell inspectors about the book that the class was reading. It had certainly captured their imagination and led to them producing high quality extended writing. The teacher's highly effective use of background music and video clips helped to stir the imagination of pupils and contributed to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Throughout the school, changes have been made to the teaching of reading and this is having a positive impact on pupils' enjoyment of books and good progress in developing literacy skills.

In a Year 4 mathematics lesson, good teaching enabled pupils to develop independence in using their strong basic numeracy skills to solve mathematical problems. The teacher planned the lesson well to ensure that pupils of all abilities were challenged in their work. He used very effective questioning techniques to extend pupils' learning. However, a few pupils did not have the ability to devise success criteria and check their own answers and were too reliant on the teacher to point out errors.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there was evidence of pupils who have special educational needs being given well-targeted support both in class and through precise intervention work, particularly those who need help in developing their speech and language. Such interventions are found throughout the school and support pupils in gaining independence in their learning.

Occasionally, lessons are not always planned and pitched precisely enough to meet individual needs. While teachers regularly feed back to pupils both orally in lessons and in their marking of work, there are occasions when teachers' comments are not followed up by pupils and there are missed opportunities to improve their work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good. Pupils behave really well in lessons and around the school, showing respect for each other, to the adults around them and to visitors. Overwhelmingly, pupils, parents and carers believe that behaviour is good. Previous concerns about behaviour during lunchtimes have been resolved with staff and pupils working together to develop a rota for lunches and the older pupils take it in turn to act as 'PALS' caring for the younger children. As one parent/carer told an inspector, St John's is 'like an extension of the family'. Overwhelmingly, pupils say that they feel safe in school and this was mirrored in comments from parents and carers. Pupils talk confidently about their understanding of different types of bullying and say that they could turn to any adult if they thought they had a problem. Pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable are exceptionally well cared for by all school staff and through highly effective engagement with external agencies. As one parent/carer wrote, 'I regard staff as a valuable resource as they help with any problems/issues that arise both in school and out!' There are effective strategies in supporting parents and carers to ensure that their children attend school regularly and this is reflected in average and improving attendance rates.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, together with leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, have made significant positive changes to the school. Having been based in temporary accommodation for two years, the pupils now enjoy new facilities and are highly motivated by a newly-planned curriculum which is engaging all groups and improving achievement. The narrowing of gaps between the progress of girls and boys is an example of how well the school is promoting equality and tackling discrimination through the focus on a curriculum which is skills based. Mental mathematics sessions ensure that pupils have a sound knowledge of basic numeracy skills which they are then able to adapt to using when working on number sentences and problem-solving. Similarly, the sessions developing spelling, punctuation and grammar are resulting in pupils creating higher quality extended writing. Numerous visitors and trips linked to topic work make an excellent contribution to raising aspirations. The pupils' graduation from the Children's University was an excellent example of how pupils are encouraged to engage in a raft of learning activities beyond lessons in school, thus enhancing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This demonstrates the school's capacity to sustain improvement.

Performance management has been used effectively to ensure that teaching is consistently good and the partnership with other schools in Blackpool provides the opportunity for teachers to develop and share good practice. Family learning is a priority for the school and examples of pupils' homework showed a high level of engagement of pupils with their parents and carers. One parent commented saying, 'I really love the fact that they [staff] allow parent and children interaction classes, for example in science'. Parents and carers have the opportunity to see at first-hand how different subjects are being taught by attending different classes alongside their children.

There are excellent approaches to safeguarding and outstanding child-protection procedures. St John's is a pivotal part of the local community and plays an essential role in the lives of pupils and their families. One parent reflected the views of many saying their child was getting 'the best start in life we could have hoped for.'

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add up exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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 July 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Blackpool St John's Church of England Primary School,
Blackpool, FY1 3NX**

Thank you for a very warm welcome when the inspection team recently visited your brand new school. It was good to see you all hard at work in your lessons and how well the older pupils care for the younger children outside of lesson times. You behave well and show respect for each other and the adults around you. It was a pleasure to be able to see so many of you graduating from the Children's University and hear about the many things that you do beyond your lessons in school.

Yours is a good school where your staff work hard to ensure you are safe and well taught. You and your parents and carers highly value your school and in the questionnaires that were completed the words 'fantastic school' appeared many times. You make good progress because you are taught well.

To improve further, we have asked that your teachers continue to help you to improve your writing by:

- matching the activities that you do in lessons to meet every individual's needs
- ensuring that teachers give you clear feedback on your work so that you know precisely how to improve their work
- involving you in devising success criteria in lessons which will help you to developing more secure skills to check and edit your own work.

You can help your teachers by continuing to attend school regularly and working as hard as you can.

Yours sincerely

Naomi Taylor
Lead inspector

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