

# Balderstone St Leonard's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Commons Lane, Balderstone, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB2 7LL

**Inspection dates** 2–3 April 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils' progress is good and improving. They achieve well from their individual starting points. By the end of Year 6, their attainment is well above average in mathematics and writing and above average in reading.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are well prepared for future learning. They develop a good understanding of the world, good skills of early reading and writing and mathematical development.
- Teaching ensures pupils enjoy school. Tasks capture their imagination. Pupils think for themselves and receive precise guidance about how to improve.
- The behaviour of pupils, attitudes to learning and respect for others are good. They have great pride in their school.
- Spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is a great strength of the school. Pupils from different backgrounds have a deep empathy with different cultures.
- The very large majority of parents value the quality of education provided by the school. They are very supportive of it, and give their children much support with learning at home.
- Leadership is good. The headteacher has the confidence of staff, pupils and parents. She is moving the school forward at exactly the right pace building on the strengths in the school. As a result, teaching and achievement are improving.
- The dedication of the staff team, coupled with the effective leadership of the headteacher and governors, means that the school is well placed to improve further.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress in reading is not as fast as it is in writing and mathematics. Not enough pupils reach the higher levels in reading.
- The expectations of what pupils are to learn are not always precise and some pupils are not challenged enough.
- Marking is not consistently effective and some pupils are unclear about how to improve.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in all classes visiting nine lessons one of which was a joint observation with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with staff including the headteacher, the manager of the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils with disabilities and special educational needs and the leader of English. In addition, discussions were conducted with the school sports co-ordinator and the leader of religious education.
- Discussions were also held with members of the governing body and a meeting was conducted with a representative of the local authority.
- Information from a range of school documentation was reviewed. This included:
  - samples of pupils' work in their books
  - the details relating to safeguarding
  - the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its performance and plans for its improvement
  - records held by the school about pupils' attainment and progress.
- The views of pupils were gathered by evaluating discussions with individuals and groups during lessons, at play and during lunch. Representative groups of pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2 met with the inspector to discuss their views of the school and to share their reading books.
- An analysis of 23 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) coupled with an evaluation of parents' opinions expressed in the school's own survey secured a picture of the parents' judgements of the school. This information was enhanced by an open meeting with 10 parents at the start of the second day of the inspection.
- An analysis of 12 inspection questionnaires completed by staff, together with an ongoing dialogue with them during the inspection, informed inspectors about their opinions.

## Inspection team

David Byrne, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. An above average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds predominantly from Pakistani and Indian heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is low. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- A very small proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard. This is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The headteacher took up post in September 2013.
- The school offers a breakfast club for pupils each morning. This is run by a private organisation which is inspected separately by Ofsted.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in reading by:
  - raising the profile of reading in and around school and in particular in classrooms
  - establishing ways of enabling pupils to read more often with adults
  - developing opportunities for pupils to have more say in what they select to read and that books are always at a level that improves their skills.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding learning by:
  - using information about pupils' progress to make sure that tasks are always hard enough to extend their skills and understanding
  - making sure pupils are consistently given precise and understandable information about what is expected of them
  - being consistent in giving high-quality feedback to pupils so that they know how to improve their work, understand the steps they need to take to reach higher standards and have the opportunity to respond to marking.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Given the pupils individual starting points, their achievement is good in terms of both their academic and personal development. By the end of Year 6, pupils are well prepared for their secondary education. They are eager to learn and have well above average attainment in reading writing and mathematics. Pupils also develop good skills of scientific enquiry and an advanced understanding for their age of a range of different religions and faiths.
- Pupils make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. From starting points that are typical for their age, they develop a good understanding of the world, develop advanced skills of writing and reading and gain a good knowledge of number and basic mathematical ideas. Most children reach good levels of development for their age by the time they move on to Year 1 and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- In Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress. They acquire a good understanding of the sounds that letters make (phonics) reaching above national expectations in the screening check by the end of Year 1. This gives children confidence in reading and writing. By the end of Year 2, attainment is typically above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- At Key Stage 2, pupils' progress continues at a good rate; by the end of Year 6, attainment is well above average in mathematics and writing including in English grammar, punctuation and spelling and above average in reading.
- Progress is accelerating rapidly in writing and mathematics. New initiatives introduced recently to give pupils more opportunity each day to write in subjects beyond English are raising achievement in writing. Many now write imaginative and well presented work. Similarly, in mathematics, pupils are getting more opportunities to apply their good basic knowledge of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division to solve investigations. Many in Year 6 are skilled mathematicians.
- In reading, while attainment is above average, progress is slower overall than writing and mathematics. The school recognises this and is developing strategies to increase opportunities for pupils read in class. Pupils are not always given enough choice about the books they read and some are not always extending their skills.
- The school is committed to securing equality of opportunity for all pupils and achieves this aim well. The achievement of pupils from their individual starting points is good for all groups of pupils. The achievement of the most able pupils is good and improving: there is a steady increase in the proportion reaching above and well above average attainment.
- Pupils from Asian ethnic heritage make good progress. They gained the highest attainment in 2013 in the national tests in Year 6 although variations occur from year-to-year.
- The pupil premium funding is used effectively to support individual pupils so that they achieve as well as others in the school. There are insufficient numbers to draw any conclusions about their attainment.
- Pupils with disabilities and special educational needs benefit from high quality support by skilled staff and a dedicated manager of their provision. They make good progress towards their individual goals which are a combination of academic and personal development targets. Their achievement is good although their attainment tends to be lower than other pupils due to the nature of their needs.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- The very large majority of parents say that learning and progress is good. The views of one sums up the general view of parents at the meeting with the inspector by stating that, 'staff go far beyond expectations'. All staff are very caring and work hard to support all pupils.

- Clear leadership by the headteacher is improving teaching and raising expectations for pupils particularly in literacy and mathematics. Increasingly, skills are shared between staff so that all are clear about what is expected and how this can be achieved.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are welcomed each day by a good array of learning activities to excite them and attract their curiosity. The children thrive on exploring indoors and out and follow their own interests. Skilful interventions by adults accelerate children's acquisition of essential skills for early reading, writing and mathematics. Children grow in confidence and develop good personal and social development.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils enjoy learning. They make good and at times outstanding progress. It is not consistently outstanding because the thorough assessments of each pupil's attainment are not always used to make sure all pupils are stretched enough. Consequently, there are some occasions when pupils' learning is slower than it might be.
- At times pupils are confused because they do not fully understand what is expected of them. Explanations sometimes lack precision because they are expressed in words that pupils do not fully understand and this restricts pupils' learning.
- While examples of effective marking by teachers at the school provide clear and understandable targets for improvement this is not yet consistent. At times marking does not give precise enough guidance about what to do to improve and pupils do not have enough opportunity to make a response to the comments provided.
- Often, very effective use of resources supports pupils' learning. In mathematics, for example, pupils in Key Stage 1, benefitted from using mathematical apparatus to help them understand the value of hundreds, tens and thousands. In writing, pupils respond to real life experiences. The arrival in school of the alien spaceship provoked some excellent writing in the style of a journalist; some very convincing newspaper reports were created.
- Pupils enjoy reading and read frequently at home with parents. Older pupils are encouraged to create exceptionally high quality reviews of selected books. The school library is a great asset that pupils use well but. some pupils do not read often enough with adults. Some pupils are over-directed when selecting their reading books and these do not always extend pupils' learning enough.
- Throughout the school teachers and teaching assistants work together very effectively. The pupils with disabilities and special educational needs receive very effective support. Talented support staff give skilled guidance for pupils needing emotional support.
- Homework is a regular feature of learning and complements lessons in school. Typically, pupils read at home, learn mathematical tables, complete spellings and comprehension activities. Three older pupils proudly shared their independently prepared presentation for class mates linked to transport since 1948 and the developments in cycling and cricket over the same period.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. It is not outstanding because while the conduct of pupils in and around school is often exemplary, during lessons where challenge is not sufficient, some pupils lose concentration and do not keep their mind on their work.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They benefit from very good leadership by staff in the importance of taking care with their presentation. Pupils' work on display in many classes is outstanding. Pupils respond by giving great attention to the way they record their work in books, much of which is equally well presented.
- Pupils say that incidents of bullying are not common and that if they occur staff take them seriously and work with the pupils to prevent its re-occurrence. Regular personal, social and health sessions build up pupils' understanding of how to manage their feelings so that everyone gets along very well. Pupils develop a good awareness of the how bullying can be applied through abuse of technology.
- Pupils are proud of the school; they develop confidence and a strong sense of right from wrong.

Spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is outstanding. Everything that occurs in the school is underpinned by Christian values. The diversity of cultures within it is celebrated and all pupils have a deep respect for each other's beliefs. As a result, pupils of different backgrounds get along very well because their cultural and religious backgrounds are valued.

- The voice of pupils is valued and there are a number of opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles within it. Older pupils assist younger ones during lunchtimes during the week, they also assist at lunchtime helping to serve and tidy up.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Rigorous procedures remove risks and promote amongst the pupils' an advanced understanding for their age of how to be healthy and act safely. Pupils and parents are unanimous that the school is very caring and secure. The level of care within the school is exemplary and reflects the view expressed by a number of parents and pupils that, 'this school is like a big, happy family'. These views are very evident during lunchtimes which are a very social occasion. Pupils sit in family groups with older pupils serving younger ones and all staff selflessly giving their own time to be part of the social occasion.
- The obvious enjoyment of most pupils in lessons, and their eagerness to learn, is a key factor in the above average attendance and good punctuality that are typical in the school.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The school has maintained its good performance since the previous inspection. The successful transition to the new headteacher has added impetus to the school's development. Progress in writing and mathematics is improving and better use of information about pupil's attainment and progress is raising achievement.
- The headteacher is astute and skilled; she gives the school a very clear educational direction. Together with a strong staff team and effective governing body the school is well placed to move forward.
- Change is occurring at exactly the right pace. The school's evaluation of its own performance is accurate. It is based on rigorous checks of teaching and pupils' progress. Information is used well to draw up very precise and pertinent plans for improvement. These are implemented after careful consideration of the views of staff and governors and where possible, of parents.
- Middle leaders make an effective contribution to the school's development. Subjects such as literacy, mathematics, science and religious education are skilfully led and contribute to improving achievement, although as yet, assessment is not always used effectively when planning activities. The provision for pupils with disabilities and special educational needs is very effectively managed to benefit the pupil's inclusion in school life.
- Teaching is checked rigorously and action taken to tackle the few remaining weaknesses. Staff targets are set based on their performance and their roles are being evaluated in response to annual reviews of their performance. Staff welcome these appraisals because it enables them to set their own professional objectives as well as agree the targets for pupils' progress. Where possible, high quality training is accessed to develop further the good professional skills of staff.
- Good links with other schools are increasingly enhancing staff development by, for example, sharing best practice and securing the accuracy of the teacher's assessment of pupil's attainment. Very strong links with the adjacent Anglican Church make a very significant difference to the pupils' education and their understanding of religious and spiritual life.
- These links coupled with a strong curriculum promotes excellent levels of spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Pupils are frequently inspired to learn because increasingly subjects are linked together and exciting activities capture the pupils' minds. For example, the recent landing at school of an alien space ship provoked pupils' imaginations and generated high quality writing across the school. A developing strength in the school is the process employed in subjects such as science and mathematics to build up the pupil's skills of learning by asking questions and seeking the answers.

- Very productive partnerships with parents make a significant difference to the education of all pupils. The very large majority of parents who gave a view say that the school gives their children a good start to life. Positive and ongoing developments to the school website, including the posting of a weekly newsletter, have improved communication. Some parents say they would like more detail about how their children are achieving in relation to National Curriculum expectations. The school is currently considering their case.
- An integral part of the school's success and current improvement is the excellent support provided by the local authority. With five visits per year, regular reviews of learning and pupils' progress, plus access to training for staff and governors, the school is extremely well supported.
- The primary school sport funding is enhancing pupil's health and well-being by enabling more to participate in interschool events. The fund also provides opportunities for staff to work with sports coaches to improve their teaching skills, for example, in gymnastics, so that better sports provision is sustained in future.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are well trained and fulfil all statutory requirements. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas to develop. Analyses are made of the performance data from the end of key stage assessments to check how well the school performs in comparison with other schools. In addition, every governor is linked with a subject, for example, numeracy or literacy so that there is an awareness of teaching in each subject and the impact on pupils' learning.
  - Finances are managed carefully to maintain a balanced budget. Changes to income caused by fluctuating numbers are, where possible predicted, so that adjustments to expenditure can be made. There is a good understanding of how the pupil premium money is being spent and its impact on the achievement of the few pupils known to be eligible for support through this funding.
  - Governors keep a close eye on the performance of the headteacher and staff; they understand that any movements up the pay scale must be linked to giving added value.
  - Governors make sure that the school is safe and secure and that all aspects of safeguarding meet requirements.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils’ needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils’ needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school’s leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	119415
<b>Local authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	439587

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	91
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Kate Wright
<b>Headteacher</b>	Janet Banks
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 May 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01254 769150
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