

Altham St James Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119577
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	379844
Inspection dates	20–21 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Geoffrey Yates

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	50
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Rennie Pinder JP
Headteacher	Mr Peter Williams
Date of previous school inspection	01 March 2007
School address	Burnley Road Altham Accrington BB5 5UH
Telephone number	01282 772174
Fax number	01282 772174
Email address	head@altham.lancs.sch.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. Six lessons were observed, taught by four members of staff. The inspector held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. He observed the school's work and looked at the tracking of pupils' progress and the school's monitoring, self-evaluation and planning for improvement. The inspector analysed 12 questionnaires returned by parents and carers. Discussions were also held with parents and carers.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work looking in detail at a number of key areas.

- How pupils achieve as they move through the school, especially in mathematics.
- How well the Early Years Foundation Stage is planned and organised to meet children's needs.
- How successful the school is in ensuring that teachers use marking and other forms of assessment well.
- How well the school provides for pupils' personal development.

Information about the school

This is a well-below average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well-below average as is the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school has gained many awards, including the Healthy School status. Since the last inspection, the school has experienced periods of considerable staff absence.

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 where pupils achieve well. All pupils are known exceptionally well and as a result the care, guidance and support they receive is outstanding. Careful identification of pupils' learning needs, high-quality targeted interventions and the good use of skilled teaching assistants all ensure that the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are met well. The school engages effectively with parents and carers who are totally positive in their responses to the inspection questionnaire about all aspects of the school. Pupils respond well in lessons, reflected in their good behaviour and very caring attitudes. They have a good understanding of the importance of feeling healthy and of keeping safe. Their enjoyment of school manifests itself in pupils' above-average attendance. From a starting point below that expected nationally children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and this good progress continues through the school. Over time, attainment is average by the time pupils leave, but rising. For example, it improved to above average in English and mathematics in 2011. Inspection evidence demonstrates that the improvement is being sustained.

Teaching is good overall and pupils respond well to the wide variety of learning opportunities provided by the good curriculum. Most lessons move at a fast pace and despite the challenge of teaching mixed-age group classes, pupils of all attainment groups are challenged effectively. Where teaching is at times less effective the pace of lessons slows. Pupils are challenged to use their writing skills well in literacy lessons but written work produced in other subjects does not always reflect what pupils, especially the more-able, are capable of. All teachers make good use of questioning and as a result pupils' willingness and enthusiasm to provide answers is a strength of the school. The analysis of data concerning pupils' progress is very thorough and is used well to identify any dips in pupils' learning, with timely support provided. However, the school recognises that marking could be more consistent in helping pupils understand how they might improve their work.

Leadership and management are good. Within this small school there is a genuine sense of all members of staff wanting the best experience for the pupils. The school works well in partnership with others to achieve that, adding interest and challenge to the pupils' activities. The governing body is increasingly involved in strategic management but recognises that there is still more to do, with further training already planned. The headteacher has an accurate and realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Despite major disruption caused by staff absence the

school has a good track record of ensuring good progress for all its pupils. For example, the previous inspection report raised concerns about the more-able pupils in Year 2 not achieving well in developing their writing skills. Four years on, the same cohort of pupils achieved above-average results in writing in the national tests at the end of Year 6. In addition, the ambition of the cohesive staff team under the capable leadership of the headteacher, coupled with a very supportive governing body, give the school a good capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to consistently good or better In order to build on the improvements in pupils' attainment by ensuring that:
 - that there is a good pace to all lessons
 - marking is used well
 - pupils, especially the more-able, are given plenty of challenging opportunities to use their writing skills in subjects across the curriculum.
- Ensure that the governing body becomes involved more-effectively in the strategic leadership and management of the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In this family school environment, pupils enjoy everything they are asked to do and achieve well. Their enjoyment of school is confirmed by the highly positive questionnaire response from parents and carers and through discussions held with parents and carers during the inspection with regard to this issue. Pupils are very attentive, extremely hard-working and keen to do their best. They learn and achieve well in lessons because they enjoy the challenges that teachers provide and are keen to contribute their ideas, knowing fully that teachers will listen and respond. They work with each other well and this helps their clarity of thinking as well as developing their language and communication skills. For example, in work producing book reviews one pupil commented ' It's not my type of book but please try it anyway.' Following on from a visit to a local town, pupils were asked to produce a tourist guide. One pupil commented 'traffic queues are a problem but the people are very friendly,' demonstrating a good grasp of what a tourist guidebook might include. In Year 6, good teaching motivated pupils to talk confidently about the use of parts of speech to improve their descriptive writing.

By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is average in mathematics and English, with the most recent national test results showing above-average outcomes. The progress of different groups of pupils is checked very thoroughly with no discernible differences, but if differences emerge, intervention strategies ensure that no group is underachieving.

Pupils are very proud of what they do. They are keen to show their work to anyone who goes into the two classrooms and are a delight to talk to. They know who they can talk to if they have any problems. Pupils demonstrate their commitment to healthy lifestyles through participation in extra-curricular activities in sport and healthy choices of food. Pupils display a high level of respect for one another and

their teachers, within the school's strong Christian environment, and have a very good sense of right and wrong. They contribute willingly to help those less fortunate than themselves. The school council gives pupils a say in everyday matters. Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities, for example, taking charge of the tape recorder during acts of worship and acting as door monitors, which they do exceedingly well. They make a good contribution to school life and are satisfactorily prepared for their future 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
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Where teaching is good or better lessons move at a fast pace and great care is taken in ensuring that pupils do not have to sit too long before being asked to carry out activities. In the better lessons, work is very challenging. For example, through the use of probing questions, older pupils are challenged to identify how they might improve a piece of writing and, in mathematics, how to ensure they know how to interpret brackets involving square numbers in calculations. Where teaching is sometimes not as strong, lessons do not move at such a good pace and written work in subjects across the curriculum is not always challenging enough to engage the more-able pupils. There is also inconsistency in marking, leading to some pupils not being clear about how they might improve their work. Throughout the school teaching assistants support pupils very well.

Curricular provision is good. The curriculum is mostly well organized to meet the differing needs of pupils within mixed-age classes. It provides some imaginative opportunities for learning and an appropriate range of experiences, which contribute effectively to the good promotion of pupils' personal development and well-being. It is adjusted effectively to meet pupils' needs, especially for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are some good examples of pupils using their information and communication technology (ICT) skills well, but limited opportunities for writing in other subjects especially for the more-able pupils. The curriculum is enriched greatly by a varied range of opportunities, including the

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

development of sewing skills, environmental work and music-making, well supported and enjoyed by the pupils.

Extremely well-prepared support staff ensure that the personal and social needs of pupils are met outstandingly well and parents and carers get the support they need. The school is assiduous in ensuring that pupils' personal needs are met because every child is known as an individual. Parents and carers are highly appreciative of the support their children receive. Pupils are secure in the knowledge that adults always listen to them. Effective links with other schools and external agencies ease transition between different schools. The school works successfully to encourage good attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Within a very caring environment, effective leadership by the headteacher, with the good support of staff and the governing body, have ensured pupils' progress is good and ambition communicated well. Within this small school, there is now greater involvement of staff in all aspects of school life. For example, the school has established a management committee since the previous inspection, which ensures that staff are more involved in decision-making. The governing body discharges its statutory duties well. However, governance is satisfactory rather than good because, although the governing body is well-informed and it has taken a key role in ensuring that the continuity of provision for pupils during an unsettled period, it is aware that it is not involved sufficiently in strategic leadership. There is good engagement with parents and carers, who are fully behind the work of the school.

The school promotes safeguarding procedures well, taking prompt and decisive action when concerns arise. Record-keeping is particularly effective and all staff benefit from up-to-date child protection training. As a result, pupils and their parents and carers reported no concerns about safety issues and pupils say they feel safe. The school has a strong commitment to inclusion and leaders and the governing body promote it well and are very active in tackling any form of discrimination. The effective partnerships established with outside institutions, including local clusters of schools, contribute effectively to many aspects of pupils' academic and personal development. Community cohesion is satisfactory. There are strong local links and pupils participate in community events. The school reaches out well to its local area. Links with schools at home and abroad provide some insight into other environments for pupils, for example, there is a link with a school in Scotland, but they have less experience of meeting people from a wide range of different cultures and backgrounds.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle well into the mixed-age class and benefit from the friendliness of older pupils and learn classroom routines quickly. They make good progress from their individual starting points. During the inspection, children, clearly, enjoyed looking after the 'patient' in the role play 'clinic' and 'booking in' other children for their appointments. The indoor learning environment is of a good quality, with good use made of the school hall in extending children's learning experiences. Children take full advantage of the good-quality and readily available resources that support all areas of their learning. The provision for outdoor learning and the opportunities for children to use the outdoor area are more limited. Children benefit from good and interesting teacher- or teaching assistant-led activities and there are plentiful opportunities for independent learning to take place. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Staff ensure that all safety and welfare requirements are met fully, despite the limitations of not having hand-washing facilities for the children close by. The high profile given to children's personal development is a major strength of the school.

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

There was an average percentage of questionnaires returned, bearing in mind there are around 33 families who send their children to the school, and some parents and carers with more than one child attending the school filling in one questionnaire. Parents and carers hold very positive views of the school with no concerns expressed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Altham St James Church of England 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 inspector received 12 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 50 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	9	75	3	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	9	75	3	25	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	6	50	6	50	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	75	3	25	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	11	92	1	8	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	92	1	8	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	92	1	8	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)	11	92	1	8	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	92	1	8	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	83	1	8	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	83	2	17	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	11	92	1	8	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	92	1	8	0	0	0	0

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



22 September 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Altham St James Church of England Primary School,
Accrington, BB5 5UH**

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave me when I inspected your school. I enjoyed my time with you thoroughly and appreciated all the help you gave me. The pupils from Year 6 who spoke to me during one of the lunch-time breaks were magnificent ambassadors for your school, as were the other children I spoke to. It was wonderful to see how keen you all are to answer questions in lessons and how well you respond to learning challenges. I will long remember the conversation I had with one of you about how to look after ferrets.

You go to a good school. You behave well, get on together extremely well and take great care of each other. You are a credit to your families and your teachers. I think the members of the school council and those with other responsibilities do a wonderful job in helping to run the school. I know you are delighted with your school because of comments such as, ' We are one big family,' 'Teachers are brilliant', ' We get on well with each other.'

You can help to keep your school a good one by maintaining your good attendance record and keeping up the hard work. In order to try and make it even more effective, I have asked the staff to make sure that all the lessons are of a good quality (many of them are already), or even better. That can be done by your teachers making sure, especially for the many good writers amongst you, that when you are asked to write in subjects such as history that your writing is as good as it is in your literacy books, and that all lessons move at a fast pace. Also, when teachers mark your work, I would like them to make sure you are given useful comments to help you improve even further. The governing body of the school is very supportive of all that the school does, but does need to be a bit more involved in some areas of its work. .

Please accept my best wishes for the future. I hope you continue to enjoy your very caring school.

Yours sincerely,

Geoffrey Yates
Lead Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.