

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Middleton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105818
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	355846
Inspection dates	5–6 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Sarah Quinn

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	335
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Fr Taigh Mullins
Headteacher	Mr Martin Atkins
Date of previous school inspection	22 October 2007
School address	Wood Street Langley, Middleton Manchester M24 5GL
Telephone number	0161 643 7594
Fax number	0161 654 6487
Email address	matkins@stmarysrcmidd.rochdale.sch.uk

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Manchester
M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 15 lessons and saw 12 teachers. The inspectors also held meetings with staff, governors, pupils and some parents and carers. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation relating to pupils' attainment and progress, and the school's management. They also took into account the views expressed in questionnaires returned by 143 pupils, 26 staff and 70 parents and carers.

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

- Pupils' learning and progress, particularly in mathematics in Key Stage 2, and whether the provision is sufficiently challenging.
- The effectiveness of the strategies to improve attendance.
- Whether there are sufficient opportunities across the curriculum to enable pupils to problem solve and use and apply their mathematical skills in real life contexts.
- Whether the monitoring of teaching and learning leads to consistency in the provision and outcomes, particularly in mathematics.
- The effectiveness of monitoring and assessment in ensuring that all children make good progress in all areas of learning.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average-sized primary school situated within a large estate in Middleton. A large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds but the proportion from minority ethnic groups is rising. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. A much-higher-than-average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The number with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible to receive a free school meal is well above average. The school runs a before and after school club that was observed as part of this inspection. The school has gained the Extended Schools award, Basic Skills Award, Activemark (Gold) and Artsmark (Gold), Healthy School status.

Since the last inspection, a new deputy headteacher has been appointed and the structure of the management team has changed. The school site is being extensively redeveloped and the new school building is due to open early 2011. Currently, the whole school is housed in the infant building.

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. It is a happy, welcoming and friendly place that takes good care of pupils. Pastoral care is an undoubted strength and is central to pupils' high self-esteem and parents' confidence in the school. A culture of respect is evident throughout the school and, as a consequence, pupils are well behaved and caring. One pupil stated, 'We are like a big happy family.' The Christian nature of the school underpins pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The extent to which pupils adopt a healthy lifestyle is also outstanding.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage arrive with skills that are low and make good progress due to consistently good teaching. A strong focus is given to personal, social and emotional development, and speaking and listening skills. Although attainment is low overall by the end of Year 6, pupils' achievement is good. Pupils make good progress overall. Year-on-year all groups of pupils make outstanding progress in English to reach average attainment by the end of Year 6. This is because the school gives a very high priority to the teaching of English and the value of enrichment activities, particularly in the arts, to increase pupils' confidence, self-esteem and language skills. Excellent use is made of a wide variety of partners to promote pupils' learning. In mathematics, progress varies across the school because the teaching is not as consistently strong as in English. In mathematics, a range of teaching styles are used, some more successful than others in accelerating pupils' progress. Pupils make the best progress where the work is practically based, and teachers plan activities for them to use and apply their mathematical skills in meaningful and fun ways. Although attainment remains low in mathematics it is improving and the attainment gap from pupils' starting points is closed significantly.

The school has satisfactory procedures in place to identify dangers and although it takes appropriate actions to minimise risks the documentation is not always sufficiently robust. Overall, the monitoring of teaching and learning successfully highlights the correct areas for development. It is particularly effective in English, leading to pupils' outstanding progress, but not yet as sharply focused in mathematics. Self-evaluation is accurate and means the school knows its strengths and weaknesses, and there is a strong determination to bring about improvement driven by the headteacher and senior management team. Priorities for improvement have led to some success. For example, senior leaders have improved attendance to an average level by using a variety of supportive initiatives with families, and attainment is rising. New initiatives, for example, marking pupils' work very well in English, guides their learning effectively but has yet to be embedded fully in mathematics. The school's capacity to sustain continuous improvement is good.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics to match that in English by:
 - - ensuring pupils have sufficient opportunity to use and apply their mathematical skills in practical ways
 - - bringing a sharper focus to the monitoring and evaluation of the teaching of mathematics to ensure all teaching is of a consistently high standard
 - - ensuring that leaders set more focused and specific targets
 - - ensure marking is effective in guiding pupils' learning.
- Ensure procedures for risk assessments are strengthened by ensuring that all documentation is sufficiently robust.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy their learning and genuinely want to please their teachers. They are well motivated and listen carefully. They try their best at all times and are keen to support each other. When given the opportunity pupils enjoy practical activities, which challenge them to think and work out problems. They especially like to work collaboratively with a partner or in a group, for example, when Year 6 pupils used co-ordinates in four quadrants to guide a lost alien home. This formed part of a book week project on aliens. The project inspired pupils' learning very well during the inspection.

The most recent unvalidated tests results for Year 6 in 2010 show an improvement in attainment and progress. The results reflect a significant increase in the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in all subjects and particularly in mathematics. The application of basic skills to real life contexts is the weaker aspect of mathematics and teachers focus strongly upon calculation strategies. Although this has been recognized as an area for improvement, the actions put in place to address this have not had full impact upon the outcomes for all groups of pupils in this subject.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their classmates and they receive additional support from skilled teaching assistants; they are given excellent care and patient guidance.

Pupils are courteous, well-mannered and helpful. Successful behaviour management systems are based on respect for everyone in the school community and the environment. Attendance rates are average and are already showing signs of further improvement this year. Pupils say they feel safe and know exactly who to go to if they are troubled. The school council gives pupils a forum for expressing their views and the opportunity to contribute to the development of the school. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and enjoy the variety of activities that take place to promote their physical skills, confidently articulating what actions will keep them healthy. Pupils make a strong contribution to their own community. The pupils keenly support a range of charities. During 'enterprise week' pupils gain skills on how to manage a budget and develop and market an item. This, together with the gains they make in acquiring skills in English and improving attainment in mathematics, prepares them satisfactorily for the future.

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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	4
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	1
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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

How effective is the provision?

The teachers place a strong emphasis on learning. As a result the pupils are encouraged to engage in discussion and ask questions. The pupils know what they are expected to learn and are given every opportunity to evaluate their own performance. They find their targets useful and their teachers' comments helpful, particularly in English. Teaching assistants provide valuable support to pupils identified as needing extra help.

Most lessons are well planned to take account of the wide range of ages and abilities in each class. The most effective lessons are characterised by high expectations, excellent pace and a good use of humour and praise to encourage engagement by all pupils. In mathematics lessons, the activities do not always provide sufficient opportunity for pupils to use and apply their skills in meaningful contexts.

The curriculum is well organised and brings together a broad range of opportunities and experiences for the pupils. The curriculum is enriched by a range of visitors, residential visits and trips, which the pupils enjoy. One artist visiting the school during the inspection commented on the enthusiasm of staff and pupils. Pupils have the opportunity to participate in arts based projects such as 'Titanic' where Year 6 pupils performed at Manchester theatres. Opportunities for pupils to use their literacy skills in other subjects are effective in promoting outstanding progress in English. Cross-curricular work in mathematics is not as strong.

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The effective care, guidance and support that the pupils receive underpin the very positive atmosphere within the school. Relationships are very strong across the school: emphasis is placed on knowing all pupils individually. Strong links with families, partnerships with agencies, and very carefully planned provision combine to enable the high number of pupils who experience difficulties to make good progress. The school works well with external agencies to provide valuable support and guidance for vulnerable pupils. Arrangements for pupils joining the school are effective in enabling them to settle to school routines and are appreciated by parents. Similarly, arrangements for pupils at the end of Year 6 ensure a smooth move for transition to high school. The breakfast and after school clubs are popular and pupils enjoy attending. These clubs are used as a method of offering support to families.

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 and managers demonstrate a commitment to improvement and share a vision for embedding ambition. Since the last inspection, provision for the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, attainment and attendance have improved. Leaders and managers have many opportunities for professional development and, as a consequence, the leadership team is effective in improving the school. High expectations of pupils' personal achievements are evident in all aspects of school life. Tracking of the pupils' progress is rigorous, and used well to improve progress and highlight any underachievement. Reports on progress are completed by subject leaders. These provide an insight into what the school needs to do to improve and further raise pupils' attainment. The reports are used to keep staff and the governing body well informed and to set out in the school development plan priorities for the whole school community. However, improvement targets, particularly for mathematics, are not always focused well enough on outcomes for pupils but rather on provision.

The governing body is well organised and very supportive of the school's aims. Governors regularly check on the progress of improvements identified in the school improvement plan. Careful checking of how pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language, are doing in comparison to their peers illustrates well the high expectations that are also placed on these pupils and the commitment to equality of opportunity. Pupils' contribution to their local community is strong, and the links with a contrasting primary school are used very effectively to enhance the pupils' knowledge and understanding of society. The school promotes community cohesion well. Pupils' involvement in local, parish and national events enhances the harmonious nature of the school. Their knowledge and understanding of

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other communities in the world are developing well, such as the links with an African group that lead to African week. Partnerships are used superbly well to ensure children's well-being and learning.

All statutory elements of the safeguarding requirements are in place, and the school is working hard to ensure that pupils remain safe during the building work. However, the ongoing updating and maintenance of the records for risk assessments are not always as rigorous as they could be as the situation changes, sometimes on a daily basis.

These are the grades for 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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
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

Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that are low when compared with those expected of children for their age. Their personal, social and emotional, communication, language and literacy development are a priority. Much attention is given to improving these skills. Good teaching and a clear knowledge and understanding of the needs of this age group are evident in the well-planned activities. Settling in periods prior to entry build good relationships with parents and carers. They also provide an initial starting point for observations that are used to plan an interesting and challenging range of activities geared towards children's individual needs. The indoor and outdoor areas are used effectively and provide a balanced range of adult-led and child-initiated activities. The outdoor area is used creatively, but does not allow lessons to flow from indoors to outdoors in the Reception classes currently, as there is extensive building work taking place. Nevertheless, the children enjoy the opportunities provided for them because the adults take every opportunity to extend learning through their involvement and conversation. For example, while building a structure outside, the adult supported problem solving skills and the children decided how to put the roof on. The children make good progress.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	2
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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A low proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. These parents and carers have a favourable view of the school. Most are strongly of the opinion that the school keeps their children safe and healthy, and that their children enjoy school. This is in line with the views of the staff, and the inspection team's judgements. A very small minority of parents and carers expressed concern about specific aspects of the school's work. These were investigated throughout the inspection and form part of the evidence used to arrive at the judgements.

Many favourable comments were made on the questionnaires such as, 'Excellent school with great teachers.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Middleton 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 70 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 335 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	46	66	23	33	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	45	64	24	34	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	33	47	35	50	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	46	33	47	4	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	35	50	31	44	3	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	34	49	32	46	4	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	41	36	51	1	1	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)	28	40	37	53	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	36	42	60	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	34	39	56	3	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	33	42	60	3	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	41	36	51	3	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	41	59	24	34	1	1	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	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 terms 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.



7 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Middleton, Manchester M24 5GL

This letter is to tell you about the findings of the recent inspection and to thank you for taking the time to talk to me and the other inspectors about your work and your school. I am also grateful to those of you who completed the questionnaire.

You attend a good school, which is very caring. Most of you say that you feel safe at school in lessons and also when you are playing in the playground. While we were at your school we thought the behaviour was good. You told us that when you are unhappy there is always someone you can tell. The school provides lots of interesting and exciting opportunities. Many of you told me about the visitors, trips and residential visits which you really appreciate and enjoy.

The headteacher, teachers and teaching assistants are helping you to make good progress. Some of you said that the targets you are set help you, and that you really enjoy the exciting activities that you do in art, drama and English. At the moment you are making better progress in English and science than you are in mathematics. I have asked the teachers to do as much as they can to help you make even better progress in mathematics, by providing you with activities that enable you to use your skills more to solve problems and to make mathematics exciting and enjoyable in every class. You can help by asking when you do not understand something and having a go at everything. We have also asked that when teachers mark your work in mathematics they always tell you how to improve your work, like they do in English.

I hope that in the future your school is even more successful in helping you to do as well as you possibly can.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Quinn

Lead inspector

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