

St Clare's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105554
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	367368
Inspection dates	22 – 23 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Jane Millward HM

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	440
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Stroger
Headteacher	Vincent Jones
Date of previous school inspection	14 April 2008
School address	Victoria Avenue Blackley Manchester M9 0RR
Telephone number	0161 740 4993
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Email address	head@st-clares.manchester.sch.uk

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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Twenty lessons were observed taught by 15 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and members of staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including the school development plan, pupils' work, progress data, minutes of governing body meetings, attendance data and safeguarding policies and records. They analysed 106 inspection questionnaires completed by parents and carers and those submitted by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

St Clare's Catholic Primary School is a much-larger-than-average-size primary school with a nursery provision on-site. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than national average as are pupils who speak English as an additional language. Numbers of pupils with a disability and/or special educational needs are lower than the national average. The school has met the government floor targets for the previous three years.

The school has gained Healthy School status. A breakfast club, run by the governing body, is available each morning. St Clare's has an informal collaboration agreement with a local primary school, resulting in the substantive headteacher currently working at the other school for half of his time. The deputy headteacher is currently non-teaching.

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	3
Achievement	3
Teaching	3
Leadership and management	3
Behaviour and safety	3
Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	Yes
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	Yes
Does the school provide value for money?	Yes

Key findings

- St Clare's is a satisfactory school, where pupils have generally good attitudes to learning and positive relationships exist between staff and pupils. The pastoral care that the school provides is effective and the staff know all pupils well. Pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable are well cared for and support from external agencies provide a well-targeted approach.
- Most pupils, including those with a disability and/or special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Although attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 remains below that expected nationally, especially in mathematics, current data held by the school show an improving trend at age related expectations. This should bring attainment more in line with national expectations. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress given their starting points.
- Teaching is inconsistent across the school. In some lessons observed, pupils were actively involved in their learning and work matched their abilities well. However, in other lessons, the pace of learning was insufficient and more-able pupils were not challenged enough. Assessment data is used well in some cases to inform teachers' planning, however, this is not always the case. In some instances, pupils were all given the same activity regardless of their ability.
- Marking is variable across the school. The better marking guides pupils to their next steps in their learning, but in other instances marking simply affirms the efforts of pupils. Some pieces of work remain unmarked and this results in teachers not building effectively on previous work and ensuring lessons best meet pupils' needs.
- The headteacher is committed and passionate about his school and is aware of

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the need to improve achievement. While leaders hold an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in school, there has been a lack of monitoring of the quality of provision. The governing body is aware of the school's priorities and is supportive of the work in school. However, there are ways in which it could provide further challenge and hold the school to account to secure future improvements.

- The majority of pupils are well-behaved. They are polite and courteous and are confident to talk about school experiences. The school takes instances of poor behaviour seriously and works hard to promote positive behaviour.
- Attendance rates have improved and the school has worked closely with pupils who have been persistently absent. This has had a positive impact as fewer pupils are now persistently absent. The number of fixed-term exclusions has risen.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, and where leadership and management is no better than satisfactory, may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and improve rates of progress in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring the more able are sufficiently challenged
 - ensuring teachers are secure in the assessment of pupils' learning
 - matching work to the needs of all learners.
- Improving the consistency of teaching and learning, including the use of assessment by:
 - using assessment information to plan activities that are precisely tailored to match pupils' needs
 - ensuring marking is consistent in all subjects and across all classes so that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve
 - developing opportunities for the most effective teachers to demonstrate the strategies to motivate, inspire and guide pupils of all abilities.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels to ensure that:
 - monitoring and evaluation arrangements are regular and rigorous
 - the governing body holds the school to account in order to secure improvement
 - monitoring is sharply focused so that it translates into appropriate actions to bring about further improvement.

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Main report

Achievement

Pupils' good attitudes in lessons and positive relationships result in most pupils enjoying learning. They behave well in lessons and generally are actively engaged in their learning. However, this picture is not yet consistent across the whole school.

Knowledge and skills are generally below what is expected when children enter the nursery and they make good progress during the Early Years Foundation Stage due to good provision. By the end of Year 2, pupils attain below what is expected nationally. This has been the case over time. When pupils leave Year 6, attainment remains below what is expected for their age especially in mathematics. Current data show some improvements with more pupils on track to reach age-related expectations. Most improvements can be seen in reading and writing, which has been a focus for the school. The school acknowledges attainment is not good enough.

Progress made by pupils is satisfactory, and is inconsistent across the school. In the past, too many pupils have made too little progress, but due to a greater focus on raising achievement, progress is beginning to improve. Pupils with a disability and/or special educational needs make satisfactory progress. The school monitors the attainment and progress of groups of learners. There is strong evidence to suggest that the school is closing the gap for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals. Current predictions in school show they are now achieving at national expectations. The attainment in reading is significantly lower than national expectations at Key Stage 1 and 2. However, there is evidence to suggest the attainment of reading is improving especially at age related expectations. Pupils are however, keen to read and display positive attitudes to reading. They are taught strategies to decode words and a programme to teach phonics is in place. Pupils are taught according to their ability and the school feels the focus on reading and developing reading skills is showing signs of improving progress and attainment levels.

Teaching

The quality of teaching is varied across the school. As a result, pupils' rates of progress alter. Many teachers make good use of other adults to support learning. Where good or better teaching was observed, it was characterised by thorough planning with a well thought out start to the lesson which enthused and motivated learners. Here, opportunities are taken to place relevance to learning, for example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils used the outdoors to identify three-dimensional shapes in the environment. Lessons develop a fascination and curiosity in learning and pupils make satisfactory and sometimes better progress. Teachers make good use of their assessments of pupils' learning, both to let pupils know how they are achieving, but also as a pre-cursor to provide challenge to the more able. However, inspectors also

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observed lessons which were less effective. Learning declined in these lessons due to a slow pace and a lack of challenge. Pupils who require support are not always provided with it, and in some cases this had a negative impact on behaviour. Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent across year groups and subjects. There are examples of good practice, where pupils are guided to their next steps in their learning. However, this is not always the case and some marking just affirms the efforts of pupils and some work remains unmarked.

The school has plans to re-design the curriculum to make it more relevant and purposeful. The school knows its context well and has already implemented plans to close the gap in attainment by focusing the curriculum to motivate and engage boys, especially in writing. Regular assessments are made on pupils with regards to the progress they make in lessons. Some teachers use this information effectively to move pupils on quickly with their learning. However in other cases, assessment information does not impact on the planning or delivery of lessons or tasks set. The school acknowledges more work is required to refine assessment processes further.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and middle leaders have worked together to improve the quality of teaching. There is a commitment to raising achievement across the school and although as yet there is limited impact of this work, positive signs are emerging that attainment is beginning to improve. More-able pupils still require further challenge to achieve as well as they might. All leaders promote equality of opportunity and aim to provide a curriculum which meets the needs of all learners. Analysis of outcomes is resulting in activities to close the gap in attainment for groups of pupils, for example, stimulus to promote boys' writing. Leaders are beginning to improve outcomes although areas of improvement remain in their infancy and hence impact is difficult to measure.

Tracking and assessment procedures have been developed, and as such, teachers now hold a more accurate view of the attainment for all pupils. There are ways in which tracking of pupils' progress can be refined to ensure they are always accurate and used effectively to plan pupils next steps in their learning. The procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance lack sufficient rigour, and evaluation is not focused enough. Leaders lack an up-to-date view of teachers' strengths and weaknesses in order to improve provision across the school. The school is in the early stages of sharing good practice and identifying the characteristics of more effective lessons, but leaders are aware of the need to refine developments and increase challenge where it is most needed. Difficult decisions have needed to be made in the past and the headteacher and the governing body are working hard to stabilise and reinvigorate the workforce. This provides the school with a satisfactory capacity to make further improvements.

Behaviour and safety

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Pupils say that behaviour in and around school is good. Relationships between pupils are positive and generally they demonstrate this in lessons. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong and feel that sanctions for poor behaviour are fair. A small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns with regards to poor behaviour and/or bullying. Inspectors investigated these concerns and found behaviour overall to be satisfactory. Pupils' engagement in lessons is varied. In the more effective lessons, behaviour is good because pupils are actively engaged in their own learning. But in lessons where teaching is less strong, pupils appear more passive in their learning and are reluctant to take part or answer questions posed by the teacher. The school maintains procedures and systems to monitor behaviour and data suggest significant improvements have been made in tackling poor behaviour of some pupils. Pupils are clear that incidents of bullying will be dealt with and policies and procedures are clear.

Attendance has improved in the school. The school has focused on reducing the number of pupils who are absent from school and has successfully introduced a range of strategies to encourage pupils to attend school regularly.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Clare's RC 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 106 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 440 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	66	62	36	34	3	3	1	1
Q2 My child feels safe at school	65	61	38	36	2	2	1	1
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	58	55	40	38	6	6	0	0
Q4 The school meets my child's particular needs	54	51	47	4	3	3	0	0
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	60	57	40	38	5	5	0	0
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	57	54	46	43	2	2	1	1
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	39	37	55	52	8	8	4	4
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	32	30	45	42	18	17	6	6
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	36	34	53	50	7	7	4	4
Q10 The school helps me to support my child's learning	51	48	51	48	2	2	1	1
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	48	45	47	44	8	8	2	2
Q12 The school is well led and managed	50	47	49	46	5	5	2	2

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 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 achievement of all pupils. ■ Behaviour and safety. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The effectiveness of leadership and management. <p>and taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
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.



24 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Clare's Catholic Primary School, Manchester. M9 0RR

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you for the very friendly welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. As you know we came to see how well you were doing and what you said helped us with our findings.

St Clare's Catholic Primary School is a satisfactory school. Your behaviour is satisfactory and you told us you felt safe at school. You know who to turn to if you have a problem and we agree that your teachers take good care of you. Your attainment is satisfactory but we can see you are starting to attain better in your lessons and are beginning to make faster progress. A new curriculum is being developed to help you learn better and the leaders in school are determined to improve your school.

To improve your school I have asked your headteacher and staff to improve three areas in the school.

- To raise attainment and improve your progress in English and mathematics.
- Improving the consistency of teaching and learning, including the use of assessment.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels.

We know that you will want to help in every way you can, so please continue to try hard in lessons and make sure you attend school regularly. I wish you every success in your education.

Yours sincerely

Jane Millward
Her Majesty's Inspector

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