

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Bacup

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119662
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	358601
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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	189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Diane Doherty
Headteacher	Mr M Richards
Date of previous school inspection	13 December 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, who observed teaching and learning in 18 lessons, taught by nine different teachers. The inspection team examined the school's policies, assessment information, pupils' work, teachers' plans and school improvement planning. They held discussions with the headteacher, staff, members of the governing body and pupils. The inspectors analysed 63 questionnaires completed by parents and carers and others by pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress children make in language in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- How well the more-able pupils are challenged and extended in lessons.
- How well teachers' marking guides the next steps of pupils' learning.
- The extent to which all leaders rigorously evaluate performance and take effective action to bring about improvement.

Information about the school

St Mary's Roman Catholic is a smaller-than-average primary school. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. A much higher than usual proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. A higher than average proportion of pupils join or leave the school partway through their primary school education. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children in Nursery and Reception. A breakfast and after-school club is run by the school and the governing body and was part of the inspection. The school has a number of awards including Healthy Schools, Eco Schools and Basic Skills Quality Mark.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Mary's Roman Catholic provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Clear leadership and good teamwork among the staff are contributing to the school's improving picture. There are some good elements to its work. An interesting curriculum has been developed with an exciting range of topics. It is enriched by a wide range of additional activities and successfully promotes enjoyment for pupils. Good care, guidance and support contribute well to pupils' personal development. Pupils learn together in a positive and safe learning environment. Most pupils are well behaved in lessons and around the school. They feel safe and show a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Community cohesion is promoted well and pupils make valuable contributions to the school and to the wider community. Attendance levels have steadily improved to above average.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children get off to a good start and make particularly good progress in language, personal development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. This is because of the first-rate care and the exciting learning experiences provided. Pupils make satisfactory progress through Key Stages 1 and 2, and attainment has steadily improved over the last three years. This is despite the above average number of pupils joining and leaving the school, some of whom enter late and with low attainment. By the end of Year 6, attainment is broadly average overall in English and mathematics but below average proportions attain the higher levels. A range of strategies have been implemented to accelerate pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. There are structured approaches to the teaching of reading and the range of writing opportunities has been extended. More investigative and problem-solving work is having a positive effect on pupils' learning in mathematics.

Teaching is improving but is not yet consistently good. Teachers establish good relationships with pupils and manage them well. In the most successful lessons, teachers are enthusiastic; pupils are challenged well and their learning proceeds at a brisk pace. In a few lessons, tasks are not sufficiently well tailored to pupils' needs, particularly those of the more able, and the expectations of what pupils can do are not consistently high. Sometimes the rate of learning slows when the lesson does not move along at a good pace. The marking of pupils' work recognises good work and provides clear guidance to help pupils improve further.

The headteacher and staff show a determination to improve the school and to do the best for the pupils. Good partnerships have been formed with other agencies to promote pupils' learning and development. While the majority of parents and carers are happy with the care and education provided, the school has not engaged successfully with a small minority. Some have expressed concerns about behaviour management, how much the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns, the help they receive to support their children's learning, and the leadership of the school. Through accurate self-

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evaluation, the school knows what it does well and has correctly identified the most pressing areas for improvement. Planning and the action taken are having a positive impact on pupils' performance. Since the previous inspection, attainment has improved from low levels to broadly average. The curriculum and care, guidance and support have improved from satisfactory to good, and teaching is improving. The school demonstrates, therefore, a good capacity for sustained improvement.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged 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?

- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment further in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6, by strengthening the consistency of teaching and ensuring that in all lessons:
 - – assessment is used effectively to match tasks to pupils' different abilities, especially those of the more able
 - – expectations of what pupils can do are consistently high
 - – that learning and the lesson move on at a brisk pace.
- Take effective measures to strengthen the engagement and the partnership with all parents and carers by:
 - – seeking their views and responding to their suggestions and concerns
 - – extending ways of helping parents and carers to support their children's learning
 - – conveying to parents and carers the school's policy and procedures, particularly about the management of pupils' behaviour.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Across the school, pupils enjoy the activities provided and show positive attitudes to learning. They were keen to tell the inspectors about their learning in lessons and about clubs and visits. Pupils commented, 'We have fun while learning ' and 'You get to find out new things' and 'Trips are great.' Most pupils, including the more able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress. There are clear signs that pupils' progress is improving because of the action taken by the school. The school's assessment records show that children who join in the Nursery and remain until Year 6 tend to reach higher standards than those who are at the school for a shorter time. Attainment is rising and the gap with national averages is closing. Given their low starting points, pupils' achievement, overall, is satisfactory.

Pupils make sound progress in speaking and listening. In a number of lessons observed, pupils made good progress in applying speaking and listening skills, particularly when discussing their learning in pairs. In others, opportunities for discussion were missed. Pupils make satisfactory progress in reading and enjoy the wide range of books available. Pupils write for a range of purposes and in different styles. Punctuation and spelling are not always accurate but these are improving. Even by Year 6, not all pupils' handwriting is fluently joined. In a good Year 6 lesson, pupils made good progress in writing about a setting. Inspired by a visual stimulus and the teacher's guidance they used good openers,

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adverbs and interesting vocabulary. The more-able pupils structured their writing into paragraphs and varied the length of sentences to good effect. There are increased opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills in other areas. For example, pupils in Year 2 wrote clear accounts of their visit to a Hindu temple. Pupils are making satisfactory progress in mathematics. There are some examples of good investigative and practical opportunities in mathematics where pupils can apply their numeracy skills. However, the more-able pupils are not always moved on to more demanding tasks soon enough.

Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected in their consideration for others. Pupils demonstrate positive qualities such as cooperation, kindness, respect for others and responsibility, well. They show a clear understanding of different cultures and faiths. Through the 'eco schools project' they take care of the environment. Most choose healthy foods and participate enthusiastically in a range of physical activities. Pupils feel well cared for at school and are confident that there are always trusted adults they can turn to if they need support. Pupils willingly take on additional responsibilities such as serving on the school council. They support those less fortunate than themselves by raising funds for a range of appeals and charities. Pupils are reasonably well prepared for their future lives and education. Their personal and social skills are well developed and they are making satisfactory progress in acquiring and applying literacy and numeracy skills.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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

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

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How effective is the provision?

Teaching is improving but some inconsistencies remain. Teachers successfully create a positive classroom environment for pupils to learn. Pupils know what they are to learn because teachers effectively share the learning objectives with the class. Clear instructions and explanations by teachers promote learning well. Questioning is used effectively to check pupils' understanding. Assessment systems have improved. Most pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to improve because they are set clear learning targets for literacy and numeracy. However, in some lessons, activities and tasks are not sufficiently challenging as assessment information is not used consistently well to plan teaching. Teaching assistants are well deployed and provide clear guidance and support for pupils who need it. The marking of pupils' work is effective. Good work receives encouragement and praise. Constructive comments effectively guide the next steps of pupils' learning.

The curriculum contributes well to pupils' personal development. A good range of initiatives have been implemented to raise pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. These are having a positive effect but have not yet had the full impact on attainment by the end of Year 6. Good links between subjects add meaning and relevance to pupils' learning. There are many additional activities to promote learning and enjoyment. Popular clubs include art, recorders, St Mary's Mag and street dance. Visits further enhance the curriculum and pupils' development. For example, a successful residential trip to Yorkshire for Year 6 provided exciting new outdoor experiences such as archery, climbing, canoeing and problem-solving activities.

Care, guidance and support are strengths of the school's provision. Adults in the school know the pupils well and establish good relationships with them. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with the support they need to take up the opportunities the school offers. Targets in pupils' individual educational plans are not always specific enough to be measured. Pupils who join during the year receive good support and are helped to play a full part in school life.

In partnership with other agencies, the school is successful in supporting pupils and their families who need additional help. Pupils' attendance is effectively monitored and promoted. However, the punctuality of a few pupils is unsatisfactory, and the school is addressing this area. About 20 pupils each day take advantage of the well-organised breakfast and after-school clubs. These provide a good start to the day and offer interesting activities.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	2

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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and staff are promoting good care and good personal outcomes for pupils. There is a clear focus on improving provision and raising pupils' achievement. Leaders and teams are playing an active part in evaluating and improving their areas of responsibility. However, the findings of the staff questionnaire reveal that there is scope to further involve staff in self-evaluation and decision-making. The monitoring and development of teaching by senior staff is having a positive impact on practice but a few inconsistencies remain.

Members of the governing body are supportive and fulfil their statutory duties. The governors are beginning to be more focused on the key areas of outcomes for pupils and the quality of provision. Governors recognise the important role they can play in building stronger partnerships with parents and carers. The school is responding to concerns raised in responses to the questionnaire.

Policies and procedures to protect and safeguard pupils meet requirements and are satisfactory. Procedures relating to pupils' care and safety are good. However, despite recent improvements, some areas of the school's accommodation are in a poor state of repair.

Equality of opportunity is promoted satisfactorily. Discrimination is tackled very well. However, improvements to the performance of pupils from different groups have not yet been sustained over a significant period. The school has a good understanding of the community it serves and promotes community cohesion well. Different cultures and faiths are promoted well through the curriculum. The school is developing good partnerships with other schools to increase pupils' understanding of the cultural diversity within the United Kingdom and in the global community.

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	3
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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	3

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Exceptionally good leadership and teamwork have led to further improvements to this setting since the previous inspection. Children settle quickly because of effective induction arrangements. Parents and carers are particularly pleased with the quality of care and education provided. Children make exceptionally good progress in their personal, social and emotional development because of the considerable attention adults give to their care and welfare. Children enter the Nursery with knowledge and skills well below those expected for their age. These improvements to provision mean that children's attainment by the end of Reception is now closer to average.

Staff in the Nursery and Reception classes plan exciting activities around themes such as 'dinosaurs' and 'people who help us'. Children are well taught and thoroughly enjoy the wide range of activities. There are examples of outstanding practice in the setting. Adults assess children's performance well and keep effective records of their individual development and progress. There is a good blend of adult-led activities and those chosen by the children. Children have good opportunities to explore, be creative and work independently. The setting rightly places much emphasis on children's language skills because these are often limited when they start school. Many children make exceptional progress in speaking and listening. They enjoy books and make good gains in acquiring and practising early writing skills. In Reception, children made very good gains in their knowledge and understanding of the minibeasts. They were fascinated by the butterflies that had developed from eggs. With guidance from the teacher, they raised and answered questions such as 'Where do they live?' and 'What do they eat?' Some areas of accommodation and learning resources are old and outdated but there are plans to improve these. The well-resourced outdoor learning areas encourage children to be active and purposeful learners.

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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Most of the parents and carers who returned the questionnaires are happy overall with their children's experience at the school. They are especially pleased with children's safety in the school, the sense of enjoyment, their children's preparation for the future and the quality of teaching. These positive views mainly reflect the findings of the inspection. Teaching is improving but is not consistently good. A small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns about how the school deals with unacceptable behavior, taking account of suggestions and concerns, helping parents and carers to support their children's learning and the leadership and management of the school. Inspectors observed

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behaviour in lessons and around the school. The inspectors spoke to staff and pupils and looked at behaviour records. They found that most pupils are well behaved and that the occasional occurrence of unacceptable behaviour is dealt with effectively by staff. In the light of the findings of this survey, senior leaders and governors are keen to tackle the above concerns and strengthen the partnership with parents and carers.

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, Bacup 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 63 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 189 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	60	20	32	2	3	2	3
The school keeps my child safe	41	65	14	22	3	5	4	6
My school informs me about my child's progress	35	56	21	33	3	5	2	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	54	21	33	5	8	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	38	60	20	32	1	2	2	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	52	18	29	8	13	2	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	37	59	17	27	1	2	7	11
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)	36	57	15	24	4	6	5	8
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	54	21	33	4	6	2	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	52	11	17	5	8	11	17
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	48	18	29	4	6	8	13
The school is led and managed effectively	32	51	15	24	2	3	10	16
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	60	13	21	7	11	3	5

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 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 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Bacup, OL13 9LJ

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school, giving us your views and showing us your work. We enjoyed our visit. Your school is providing a satisfactory level of education, with some areas which are good. The school is showing clear signs of improvement.

These are the school's main strengths.

- You really enjoy school and your attendance is above average.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have a good start.
- A good range of additional activities is offered, including clubs and visits.
- You get on well with each other and your behaviour is good.
- You have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and fit.
- You feel safe at school because teachers and other adults take good care of you and provide good guidance and support.
- You make good contributions to the school and to the wider community.
- The school has developed good partnerships with others who support learning in the school.
- The headteacher and staff are effectively improving the school.

We have asked the headteacher and teachers to do the following things to improve areas of the school's work.

- Improve the quality of teaching so you make consistently good progress in lessons. We have asked teachers, in some cases, to match the work more carefully to your abilities, and to ensure that learning and the lesson move along at a quicker pace.
- Strengthen the partnership with your parents and carers so that the school can deal with their concerns and help them further to support your learning.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard, particularly in English and mathematics. A few of you should improve your punctuality so that you do not miss any learning at the start of the day. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Watts

Lead inspector

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