

St Clare's Catholic Primary School, Preston

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119587
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	379846
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2012
Lead 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	250
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Havey
Headteacher	Mark Purcell
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2006
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Introduction

Inspection team

Geoffrey Yates
Bernard Dorgan

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspection team observed teaching and learning in 17 lessons, observing eight teachers. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, teaching staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and groups of pupils. The inspectors also heard 10 pupils read. There were no responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to take account of in planning the inspection. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at governing body minutes, the systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress, safeguarding procedures, pupils' work, and teachers' planning and marking. Inspectors took account of 100 questionnaires completed by parents and carers and those completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

Saint Clare's Primary School is an average-sized primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds but since the previous inspection there has been an increase in the number of pupils who speak English as an additional language. However, there are no pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well-below average. The percentage of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs is below average. The school has achieved a number of awards including the Sports Active award. The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

There is on-site after-school provision for pupils which is not managed by the school. This provision is subject to a separate Ofsted inspection.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. Under the good leadership of the headteacher the school promotes pupils' learning successfully and serves its community well within a strong family environment. It is not outstanding because teaching is only good overall, although there are some examples of outstanding teaching.
- Pupils' achievement is good. Children achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage from starting points which are those expected for their age, with some children exceeding that expected. By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, their attainment is well-above average in English and mathematics. An above average proportion of pupils are attaining at the higher Level 5. The school's arrangements for the teaching of reading are precise and rigorous, leading to well-above average attainment at the end of both key stages.
- The quality of teaching is good overall. Pupils learn well because most teaching is ambitious and skilful. Positive relationships between teachers and pupils are strong. Some aspects of teaching are not as strong, with the pace of lessons not always as brisk as it could be. Work is not always matched well to pupils' academic needs with teachers occasionally not providing sufficient opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their writing skills across the curriculum.
- Parents and carers think highly about the school. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and they are clear about what is acceptable and what will result in sanctions. Incidents of bullying and incidents of racial harassment are few and far between and dealt with well. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe in various situations, including when using the internet.
- Leadership and management are good as are the leadership and management of teaching. While middle leaders do monitor pupils' work, they are not always involved in monitoring teaching in classrooms.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure teaching is consistently good or better by:
 - taking every opportunity for pupils to extend their good writing skills well in subjects across the curriculum
 - giving clearer guidance to pupils about how they might improve their own work in subjects other than English and mathematics where guidance is good
 - making sure all lessons move at a suitable pace
 - developing further the roles of subject leaders in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in their subject areas.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Attainment on entry is broadly in line with what is expected with some children having skills above those expected. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Good assessment procedures and the strong focus placed on the promotion of children's early language experiences mean that children are increasingly well prepared for their future learning by time they start Year 1. For example, during the inspection, children made very good gains in learning in mathematics by correctly identifying what time it was on a clock. The use of a facial mask of a wolf really engaged children's attention with the child behind the mask being asked, 'What time is it Mr Wolf?' Children demonstrate tremendous enthusiasm for the tasks and behave exceedingly well. By the time children move into Key Stage 1, almost all are exceeding the goals expected at this age.

Progress continues to be good in Key Stages 1 and 2. In all year groups, good progress in developing pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy is the result of good teaching. For example, in an outdoor Year 5 science lesson, focusing on the importance of soil conditions when planting vegetables, pupils showed excellent skills in organising their own research. They confidently used subject-specific vocabulary, for example whether their tests found the soil to be neutral or acidic and what type of soil would be better for the growth of different types of vegetables. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school because they receive good quality support and lessons are well planned to match work closely to their identified needs. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress because through careful use of assessment data, work is carefully matched to their needs.

It was clear from the lessons observed and from the school's assessment data that all groups of pupils, regardless of gender, ability or background, learn well. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 in the last five years has been consistently well-above average. This year, pupils in Year 6 are well on track to attain above average levels. Attainment in reading is typically well-above average at the end of Year 2 and well-above average by the end of Year 6.

Throughout school, pupils listen attentively to their teachers and speak well in response to carefully-framed questions. They take a pride in their work. They often write meaningfully at length, although opportunities are missed to practise and improve their literacy skills in

other subjects. Pupils make good use of opportunities for discussion. For example, Year 2 pupils confidently discussed the connectives they had used to improve their writing. One child had used 'and' to link together her ideas. She was rightly proud of her sentence, 'Peter had an old cap and shiny cotton wool hair'. Parents and carers who replied to the questionnaire are happy about the progress their children make.

Quality of teaching

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who replied to the questionnaire, and their children, think teaching is good and this was confirmed by inspection findings. Teachers ensure classroom routines are made clear and are regularly reinforced. Relationships between teachers and pupils are of the highest order. Consequently, pupils learn well, especially in English and mathematics. Support staff carry out their duties well ensuring that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. Where teaching is sometimes not as strong, the pace of lessons slows and as a result opportunities are missed to extend pupils' learning. Where teaching is sometimes outstanding, teachers generate high levels of enthusiasm for learning among pupils and as a result pupils make rapid progress. All teachers stress the importance of helping and caring for each other, this contributes very well to pupils' very good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, for example, pupils are acutely aware of the need to help those less fortunate than themselves, with one pupil commenting, 'You have to help the children in Hodovo (town in Bosnia) because we have so much and they don't.'

In literacy and numeracy lessons, teachers effectively check pupils' understanding through skilled questioning, anticipating when they need to intervene to support or challenge. For example, in the Year 5 class, with a focus on the use of dramatic language the teacher expertly intervened to explain the idiom, 'this is a pretty kettle of fish'. In other subjects, for example, in a science lesson in Year 6, the teacher demonstrated good subject knowledge, skilled class management and very high expectations of work and behaviour. A brisk pace was set and pupils responded very well to the teacher's questions. Pupils were well motivated and made good progress in their understanding of the importance of food chains. A scrutiny of pupils' work shows limited opportunities for extended writing in science, geography and history, with at times too much reliance on commercially produced worksheets. Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers plan activities which interest and motivate children well, for example by using phonemes (the small segments of sounds in words) in children's names to develop children's early reading skills and an abundance of opportunities to write. Provision has improved since the previous inspection but outside provision does not always reflect the quality found in both classrooms.

Throughout the school teachers have a very good understanding of the progress that pupils are making in literacy and mathematics due to the rigorous analysis of assessment and tracking data. Regular homework contributes well to pupils' learning. Marking is of a consistently high quality in literacy and mathematics, leading to high levels of engagement from the pupils, but opportunities are missed in other subjects to provide pupils with clear pointers for improvement.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Almost all parents and carers who replied to the questionnaire confirm that behaviour is of a high standard and that their child feels very safe and secure in school. Pupils agree.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding. It is managed very well and pupils are enthusiastic about learning and are eager to contribute. They make an exceptional contribution to their own learning. They seize opportunities to work independently and participate fully in paired work and whole-class talk. There is a real family feel to the school and relationships are very strong. Incidents of poor behaviour are extremely rare, as reflected in the nil return reported incidents of poor behaviour in recent years. Pupils appreciate the care staff provide. Pupils have a very good understanding that bullying can take many forms and are adamant that 'their' school will deal with any type of bullying very well. They say that they are free from bullying and harassment. In the playground pupils say they feel very safe and secure and they are confident in adults' ability to respond promptly to any problems they might have.

Strong care and attention given to individuals contribute to their outstanding personal development. Throughout the school pupils are exceedingly polite and courteous with each other and towards visitors. For example, during the inspection on a very warm day, a pupil came to talk to an inspector and made the opening remark, 'Isn't it a beautiful day are you enjoying your time with us?' Pupils take on a number of different responsibilities across the school, for instance as school councillors and carry these out very responsibly. Pupils clearly enjoy coming to school, as shown by their above-average attendance record.

Leadership and management

The very strong leadership and management of the headteacher with the support of senior staff and middle managers have led to the school continuing to improve and it is so well thought of by parents and carers that it is oversubscribed. The headteacher provides a strong direction with pupils' needs at the forefront of everything he does. As a result, the school provides a highly positive and caring learning environment. The leadership and management of teaching and learning are good by senior leaders. Middle leaders, while being fully involved in monitoring planning, tracking data and scrutiny of pupils' work, are not sufficiently involved in monitoring lessons. The school has a good capacity to improve because it has an accurate view of itself and has maintained well-above average standards of attainment since the previous inspection. All staff, including teaching assistants, are enthusiastic and skilful in ensuring pupils make good progress. The governing body carries out its duties well providing strong challenge and support.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding, including the checking of staff's suitability to work with children, are exemplary. The governing body and leadership team ensure that equality and awareness of diversity are promoted very well. As a result, for example, the growth in the number of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds has been managed exceedingly well with all pupils, no matter what their ethnicity, made to feel very welcome as part of the Saint Clare's family.

The curriculum is good and meets pupils' needs well. The Early Years Foundation Stage provides a positive learning environment, with a good balance of adult-led and well-planned activities for children to select for themselves. Across the school teachers make good use of projects and interventions to enhance the curriculum. The curriculum stimulates pupils' interests very well. It includes a wide range of worthwhile experiences, as demonstrated in the excellent work done linked to a project on Antarctica and HMS Endurance. However, opportunities are missed for pupils to use their writing skills well across the curriculum. Leaders and managers play a crucial role in promoting pupils' good spiritual, moral, social

and cultural development by consistently reinforcing the importance of this aspect of provision through assemblies and lessons.

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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



28 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Clare's Catholic Primary School, Preston PR2 9HH

Thank you for the lovely warm welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. What was equally warm was the weather and it was wonderful to see you all playing out so well together in the sunshine. We thoroughly enjoyed our time with you and appreciated all the help you gave us. The pupils who spoke to us during lessons and lunchtime breaks were magnificent ambassadors for your school. It was wonderful to see how keen you all are to talk about the work you do in lessons and how well you respond to learning challenges. Across the school it was a delight to see how well you are developing your reading skills.

Your school is right to say that you go to a good school. You behave outstandingly well, get on extremely well together and take great care of each other. You are a credit to your parents and carers and to your school. The members of the school council, and those with other responsibilities, do a wonderful job. I know you like your school because of comments such as, 'We are one big family', and, 'Our teachers really help us.'

You can help to keep your school a good one and to make it even better. In order to try and make it even more effective, the team want all of the teaching you receive to be consistently good or better. One of the ways of doing that is to give you more opportunities to use your good writing skills in subjects such as history and geography. You can help by making sure that when you do write in these other subjects you use writing skills you have very well. We also want your teachers to make sure they use marking well in these other subjects to help you improve. Please accept my best wishes for the future, continue to enjoy your very caring school. I hope the trip some of you are making to Bosnia is successful and rewarding. Keep up with your efforts to help the children in Hodovo.

Yours sincerely

Geoffrey Yates
Lead inspector

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