

St Richard's Roman Catholic Primary School Atherton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106498
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	377412
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Diane Auton

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	173
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine Price
Headteacher	Dawn Nulty
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons and observed seven teachers in their classrooms. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils and parents and carers. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including pupils' progress and attainment data, the school's planning documents, policies, procedures and records. They reviewed information provided by parents and carers in 44 completed questionnaires. They also took into account the views pupils and staff expressed in the questionnaires they returned.

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

- Inspectors examined pupils' rate of progress to see if it is improving securely and quickly enough, especially in Key Stage 2.
- They looked at the effectiveness of the school's provision to support rapid improvement in English and mathematics.
- The team evaluated whether actions are planned and implemented with sufficient effectiveness to support a rapid pace of whole-school improvement.

Information about the school

The school is slightly smaller than most other primary schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is a little below average. Most pupils are White British, with a very small proportion from minority ethnic heritages. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2010.

During the period since its last inspection, the school has experienced significant staffing turbulence, relating to teachers and to support staff and including both personnel changes and long-term sickness absences; some of the latter are still on-going.

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

3

Main findings

The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Provision is improving rapidly and pupils are provided with good care, guidance and support. There has not yet been enough time, however, for improvements that are currently under way to have a full impact on attainment outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2.

Most children enter the Reception class with skills that are below expectations for their age group. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has been broadly average for most of the last five years, although it dipped below average in 2011. The school has identified gaps in some pupils' learning, linked to the negative impact of recent staffing turbulence. Leaders are taking decisive action to address this problem and to ensure that attainment gets back on track and some early indicators of improvement are already evident. Good or outstanding learning and progress were seen in some lessons during the inspection; in the current Year 6, in particular, learning is moving along at a rapid pace. The overall pace of learning across the school is satisfactory, rather than good, however, and this is directly linked to the quality of teaching which is satisfactory. Although leaders are working hard to eliminate inconsistency in the quality of teaching, some of the positive strategies that have been introduced, for example improved marking methods, are not yet being implemented effectively in every year group.

The curriculum is satisfactory and is being redesigned to ensure that it engages pupils' interests and fully supports the development of their basic skills as well as their knowledge and understanding of the world. This work is still in progress and older pupils are already appreciative, saying that lessons are now starting to be more interesting and fun. The learning environment in school has been greatly enhanced since the last inspection by improvements to premises and resources.

Pastoral care is good and pupils respond well to this, with older pupils starting to take on responsibilities around the school, including acting as buddies to younger ones. This enhances the school's supportive family ethos. Behaviour, attendance and punctuality are all good. Good provision and leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage gets children's education off to a positive start.

The capable headteacher, supported by a well-informed governing body and by an effective deputy headteacher, provides a clear focus on school improvement. Self-evaluation is accurate, based on systematic monitoring and rigorous assessment.

Subject leaders are starting to help to assure the good quality of provision. The school plans appropriate strategic actions for improvement. The criteria against which the success of its actions should be measured are not defined sharply enough, however, and this reduces the leaders' ability to assess their impact. For all of these reasons, therefore, the school's capacity for continuing improvement is currently satisfactory.

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?

- Raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress, by:
 - ensuring that the quality of teaching is consistently good or better and that learning is supported by an appropriate pace in all lessons
 - ensuring that the curriculum provides a wide range of frequent opportunities for pupils to practise, develop and apply their basic skills in work across other subject areas
 - improving consistency in the quality of marking, so that it always gives pupils clear guidance on the next steps they need to take to improve their work.
- Define precise success criteria in the school development plan, so that the impact of actions can be measured accurately to provide an overview of school performance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' attitudes to school are positive. They enjoy school and their achievement is satisfactory. They show interest in their work and are responsive learners. They enjoy working with a partner or in a group; this helps them to develop their thinking and to offer their ideas with growing confidence. Their concentration and study skills are developing well; in most lessons they listen carefully and work hard.

Pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory. The school is working hard to ensure improved attainment in the current year, following last year's dip in outcomes for Year 6 pupils. Assessment data for the last school year together with evidence seen in lessons and in pupils' current work all show that attainment across the school is broadly average and that pupils are making satisfactory progress overall. Pupils in the current Year 6 are doing particularly well as a result of outstanding teaching; they are making accelerated progress and are on track to reach nationally-expected levels by the end of the school year. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress in relation to their abilities and starting points, in line with that of their peers.

Pupils show a good understanding of issues of personal safety. They form good relationships with each other and with the adults in school and they say they are

confident help is on hand if they encounter any problems. Pupils, parents and carers agree that school is a place of safety. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and they participate enthusiastically in the range of activities provided to support their health, fitness and well-being. They enjoy taking responsibility, for example as members of the newly-revived school council. All of this, together with their improving basic skills, contributes to preparing them satisfactorily for the next stages in their education. Pupils show a good understanding of the sound moral values the school promotes and this is reflected in their good behaviour and considerate attitudes. Attendance has improved and is now above the national average.

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	3
The extent to which pupils develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, with some good and outstanding practice. Where teaching is most effective, lessons are planned well to take the range of learners' needs into account and learning moves along briskly. This contrasts with a substantial minority of the lessons seen during the inspection, where teaching was satisfactory rather than good. In these lessons, the pace of learning was often uneven, pupils' interest was not always fully engaged and, as a result, their progress was slower than it need have been. The school has overhauled and improved its systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. This means that class teachers now have a clear overview of how all pupils are doing and this is helping them to identify where extra support is needed. Teaching assistants help to support pupils' learning effectively, especially those who have additional needs.

The curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced. The school has begun to focus on a creative, themed approach, with topics matched to pupils' interests. This is at an initial stage of development with more work to be done to ensure sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop and apply key skills in their topic work. The curriculum is enriched by opportunities for pupils to develop sporting and musical skills and to learn a modern foreign language. Projects with visiting artists give good

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

support to developing creative skills. A range of visits and visitors helps to promote pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education. Additional support programmes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensure that they enjoy access to learning and are included in everything on offer.

Pastoral care is good and the school works sensitively to support vulnerable pupils and their families. This is helping to break down barriers to learning and progress that some pupils encounter. Attendance and punctuality are promoted very effectively. Strong links with the local secondary school benefit pupils at transition. The school collaborates well with a range of agencies that support pupils' health, welfare, social and learning needs.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The governing body shares the headteacher's clear vision for moving the school forward. The deputy headteacher's appointment has added further strength to the leadership team and she is playing a key role in helping to drive improvements forward. Subject leaders are now starting to work together to plan the school's new creative curriculum, although this is still at an early stage of development. Regular reviews give a clear picture of how much progress pupils are making in reading, writing and mathematics and the school uses this increasingly effectively to plan the next steps in provision and to identify where further support is required. The quality of teaching remains uneven across the school, despite regular monitoring, and leaders are aware that further action is needed to address this imbalance. The supportive governing body is developing its capacity to act as the school's critical friend. Success criteria defined in the otherwise well-crafted school development plan are not sufficiently precise, and this reduces leaders' ability to assess exactly how well the school is doing.

Parents and carers appreciate all that is done to support their children's welfare. The school complies appropriately with statutory requirements for safeguarding, health and safety and child protection through sound procedures and on-going review of their effectiveness. Its inclusive ethos promotes equality of opportunity and access to educational entitlement satisfactorily. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion through a range of partnerships and activities in the community and with the church and parish.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
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	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the Reception class, so that by the end of the year, although their skills are slightly below expected levels for their age, they have developed very positive attitudes and have become happy, interested learners. The quality of teaching is good and children are provided with a good balance between activities they choose for themselves and those led by adults. This supports the development of independence skills well. Assessment is informed by evidence gathered through observations of the children in their activities and staff use this information well to help them plan the next steps in their learning. The setting is effective in identifying and supporting children with additional learning needs. Children interact well with each other and enjoy warm, trusting relationships with the caring staff. As a result, they grow in confidence, they are happy and secure and ready to learn. They settle quickly because induction procedures are sensitive and the staff establish positive relationships with parents and carers and keep them well-informed about their children's progress. The setting is led and managed well and the staff team works together well. Staff have created a stimulating and supportive learning environment both indoors and in the well-resourced outdoor area. Provision is monitored regularly and this supports ongoing improvements. Procedures to ensure children's welfare are good and meet all requirements.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A small minority of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Most of those who responded said they agree or strongly agree that they are happy with their children's experience at the school. This is in line with the inspection team's findings. Parents and carers who met with a member of the inspection team said that the school is very caring, staff are warm and welcoming and their children are doing well in their learning and progress. They remarked on the school's good communications with families, through regular questionnaires and meetings. They also spoke of their appreciation of the good support provided for children when they start school in the

Reception class and when they transfer to secondary school. A small minority of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire raised issues about behaviour management in school, although others reported that they, like the inspection team, find that the school manages behaviour well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Richard's Roman Catholic Primary School Atherton 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 **44** completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 173 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	48	16	36	7	16	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	23	52	15	34	3	7	2	5
The school informs me about my child's progress	17	39	20	45	5	11	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	36	20	45	5	11	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	15	34	21	48	6	14	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	36	21	48	5	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	39	24	55	3	7	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)	14	32	22	50	3	7	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	45	15	34	6	14	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	32	15	34	8	18	5	11
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	30	20	45	6	14	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	12	27	20	45	6	14	4	9
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	19	43	15	34	6	14	2	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



3 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Richard's Roman Catholic Primary School Atherton, Manchester M46 0HA

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. As you know, we came to see how well the school is doing and how you are all getting on with your learning.

We found that St Richard's RC Primary is a satisfactory school where many improvements are taking place. Your education gets off to a good start in the Reception class and, as you move up through the school, you learn and grow together happily. You are well-behaved and polite young people. Your attendance is good. You work hard in your lessons and you get on well with each other and with the adults in school. They look after you well. They have been working hard, too, to improve the quality of teaching in school, in order to help you to do as well as possible. Because of this, you are now starting to make more rapid progress in your learning and we were pleased to hear from some of you that you think that lessons are more interesting and fun than they used to be.

We think the school's improvement drive has got off to a promising start, but there are still some areas that need further attention. These are some things I have asked the school's leaders to do next, because I think they will help your school to carry on improving.

- Make sure that teaching is always good or better.
- Make sure that teachers, when they mark your books, always give you helpful advice for improving your work.
- Make sure that you have plenty of opportunities to use and develop your literacy and numeracy skills in your topic work.
- Improve the big plan that they make for the school each year by putting more details in it about how they are going to measure how well the school is doing.

You can all help by continuing to do your best and by continuing to be happy learners.

With my very best wishes for the future,

Yours sincerely,

Diane Auton
Lead Inspector

