

# St Ambrose RC Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105520
<b>Local authority</b>	Manchester
<b>Inspection number</b>	377255
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 November 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Judith Tolley

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	184
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Father JP Earley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Charles Flannery
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 June 2007
<b>School address</b>	Princess Road Chorlton-Cum-Hardy Manchester M21 7QA
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 14 lessons and 11 teachers; they held meetings have been held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's analysis of pupils' progress and improvement plans. They analysed 88 parental and 70 pupils' questionnaires.

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

- Whether teaching is challenging enough.
- Whether assessment information is used effectively in lesson planning and in informing pupils about how to improve.
- Whether middle leaders are fully involved in the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning.

## Information about the school

This is a smaller than average size primary school. There is a breakfast club and an after-school club, run by the school. The school serves the local Catholic community but takes pupils from a wide range of different cultures and faiths. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than average. A higher than average proportion of pupils is from minority ethnic groups and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is broadly average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average overall, but varies from year to year. The school has Healthy School status and has achieved several awards, including the Eco School silver, International School and Every Child a Reader.

**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

St Ambrose is a satisfactory and improving school. It is a caring and welcoming community where pupils are known and valued as individuals. It has strengths in pupils' good personal development and in the good care, guidance and support it provides for them. It forms good partnerships with other schools and agencies both to give pupils experiences the school itself cannot provide and to promote pupils' well-being. Parents and carers value the relationship the school has with them to help them support their children's learning. The success of the work the school does in partnership with parents and carers is evident in the positive attitudes pupils have towards their learning and improving attendance, which is now in line with the national average.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are well below those expected for their age. They make good progress but enter Year 1 with skills that are below expectation for age. Pupils make satisfactory progress through Key Stages 1 and 2. By the time they leave Year 6, attainment in English and mathematics is below average overall. Pupils make particularly good progress in reading as a result of the effective programmes used by the school and the love of reading for pleasure which the school engenders.

Pupils enjoy school, are eager to learn and their behaviour is good. Teaching is satisfactory and there are instances of good and outstanding practice. However, some lessons, although satisfactory, lack the pace and vitality to enthuse pupils to the same extent as the good and outstanding ones. The curriculum enables pupils to make satisfactory progress in acquiring basic skills. The school is developing its curriculum to better meet the needs and interests of the pupils, but this is still in its early stages so that its full impact in raising attainment is yet to be seen. A good range of activities outside lessons contributes greatly to pupils' enjoyment of learning. Systems to assess pupils' progress, that have been developed since the last inspection, are helping teachers have a clear and accurate view of pupils' performance and how it can be improved. However, this information is not always used as effectively as it might be to ensure all pupils are given the right amount of challenge to achieve their full potential in lessons. Although marking is regular and encouraging, the guidance pupils are given about how to improve their work is not always detailed enough nor linked clearly enough to their targets, in order to raise their attainment significantly.

Senior leaders have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and areas for development. They have accurately identified priorities for the school, have been successful in improving the quality of teaching and learning, through well-targeted support and professional development, and provide very clear direction for the school. Although subject leaders are involved in the school's self-evaluation process, they are still developing their role in improving teaching and learning and in planning the curriculum to ensure opportunities are taken to develop pupils' basic skills effectively in a range of contexts. The governing body is very supportive and fully involved in the life of the school. All these factors demonstrate the school's satisfactory capacity to improve further.

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 the progress pupils make in English and mathematics by:
  - improving the use of assessment information to ensure that, in lessons, the needs of all different groups of abilities are fully met
  - giving more detailed guidance to pupils so that they have a better understanding of how well they are doing and how to improve their work.
- Ensure that subject leaders contribute fully to improving the quality of teaching and learning in their subject areas and to planning the curriculum so that it better supports pupils' learning and accelerates their progress.

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

<b>3</b>
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Pupils make satisfactory progress overall across Key Stages 1 and 2, and in some lessons progress is good or better because of well-planned and vibrant teaching. Attainment in reading and writing is close to average but in mathematics is below average. Despite a dip in attainment in 2011, that was a result of difficulties outside of school encountered by a minority of pupils, attainment overall is rising across all year groups as a result of improvements in teaching and in the use of assessment information to track pupils' progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve satisfactorily and are able to participate fully in whole-class activities, as a result of the good support they receive both in lessons and through programmes tailored to meet their individual needs. The small number of pupils learning English as an additional language also achieve satisfactorily.

In lessons, pupils make the best progress when they are given the opportunity to discuss ideas with a partner or work collaboratively in small groups to solve problems. When asked to work independently, for instance in reading, they do so enthusiastically and maintain high levels of concentration. Enjoyment in their learning was particularly evident in a Year 4 literacy lesson where they were given the opportunity to analyse different characters in a story through drama. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay fit and healthy, and they take advantage of the

good range of sporting activities provided to help them do so. They have a good sense of how to stay safe and are confident that adults will be there to help them if need be. They have a good understanding of right and wrong and display respect for each other and the different cultures and faiths represented in the school. They get on well with each other and adults in the school. They willingly take responsibility, for instance, as school councillors, 'Eco warriors' and librarians and are fully involved in helping to improve their school.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Good relationships between staff and pupils form a sound basis for learning. A strong feature of lessons is the good support provided by teaching assistants for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, helping these pupils to make at least satisfactory progress and to participate fully in activities alongside their classmates in lessons. Where pupils make good or outstanding progress this is the result of detailed planning and sharply focused activities that challenge pupils to learn. The school is currently developing a 'creative' curriculum to better engage pupils' interest. Although pupils develop basic skills of literacy and numeracy at a satisfactory rate, opportunities are missed to do this in lessons in subjects other than writing and mathematics. The curriculum is tailored appropriately to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Individual needs are identified and catered for through a range of intervention strategies, such as help with reading. The school enriches the curriculum well through a good range of additional activities that include drama, dance, French, a range of musical activities, including the opportunity for every child to learn a musical instrument, and a wide range of sporting activities. It also makes good use of links and partnerships to enhance the provision. For example, in partnership with other local schools a drama project will culminate in a performance of Macbeth.

Safeguarding procedures meet current government requirements well. As a result, pupils feel very safe in school and are confident that they receive good care. They

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

know who to turn to if they have a problem and are sure that any issues they raise will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Great care is taken to ensure that pupils from minority ethnic groups and other faiths are fully integrated with school life and that their contribution to its richness and quality is valued. The school works very well with outside agencies to support pupils and their families and to remove barriers to learning. Effective strategies used by the school to improve attendance and reward good behaviour are fully understood and valued by the pupils.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership team provides clear direction and drives ambition well. However, this direction and drive does not always translate into action in the classroom because subject leaders are not sufficiently involved in using their subject expertise to improve the quality of teaching and learning or to ensure opportunities are taken to develop skills in their areas of responsibility through detailed curriculum planning. Strategies to check the school's performance are firmly rooted in management practice, resulting in accurate self-evaluation. This, in turn, leads to well-focused actions to secure improvements. A good example of this is the progress meetings about individual pupils, held termly between the headteacher, relevant senior managers and class teachers. Pupils' progress towards their targets is tracked closely and underachievement is quickly identified and remedied.

The school is successful in eliminating discrimination and is strongly committed to promoting equality. This commitment is evident both in the school's celebration of different cultures and faiths as well as in the wide range of extra help given to individuals in lessons, one-to-one sessions and small group work. Procedures for safeguarding pupils and the safe recruitment of staff are robust. The school works very closely with parents and carers and outside agencies to ensure that pupils are safe and frequently reviews its procedures. Pupils are very much aware of how to stay safe both in every day routine activities and when using the internet.

Promotion of community cohesion is good. The school itself is a harmonious community and it has established strong local and international links through its involvement with the local network of schools and through the Catholic Church. The school's work with parents and carers to hone their parenting skills and to involve them in the work of the school has had a positive impact upon pupils' attendance and their attitudes towards learning. Pupils have regular contact with schools in Kenya as well as other schools within the local community and make a strong contribution to the wider community, for instance, through drama and musical activities as well as their fundraising. The school evaluates the impact of these activities upon pupils' personal development and their progress. The governing body is very supportive and is developing its capacity to challenge the school.

*These are the grades for the leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Many children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are well below those typically seen for their age. This is particularly so in relation to their personal, social and emotional development and in communication, language and literacy. The children achieve well overall and make good progress, especially in their personal, social and emotional development and their language development. This is because teachers and teaching assistants take every opportunity to engage children in conversation about their play, and to extend their range of vocabulary through a variety of exciting activities both inside and out, which engage children’s interest. By the end of the Reception Year children's development is below that expected overall, but they are confident and enthusiastic learners who work and play well together.

Rigorous procedures ensure children's welfare, and staff engender warm and supportive relationships with the children, ensuring that they feel very well cared for and safe. All of this, together with a good balance of adult-directed and child-initiated activities, results in children who are eager to come to school, have very good attitudes to learning and are becoming increasingly confident and independent. Teachers and teaching assistants work very effectively as a team. The assessment of children's learning is continuous and accurate. It is used very effectively to determine next steps in learning and takes good account of children's individual needs and interests both in adult-led and child-initiated activities. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well. There is good awareness of the aspects that need to improve and well-considered plans to achieve improvements.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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 higher than average proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. The very large majority have positive views of the school. They are pleased with the progress their children make and say their children enjoy school. A small minority of those who responded expressed concerns about the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found that the school dealt promptly with unacceptable behaviour and pupils themselves said they were confident that this was dealt with promptly and effectively. There were few written comments but in these were testimonials from parents and carers about the high levels of support given both to them and to their children, the approachability of teachers and how effectively the school has acted to deal with their concerns.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Ambrose 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 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 88 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 184 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	56	37	42	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	42	48	43	49	3	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	40	45	44	50	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	41	49	56	3	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	41	47	45	51	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	43	49	43	49	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	44	46	52	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	26	30	53	60	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	43	45	51	3	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	42	39	44	5	6	4	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	42	42	48	3	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	35	40	46	52	2	2	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	43	45	51	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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 November 2011

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of St Ambrose RC Primary School, Manchester, M21 7QA**

On behalf of all the inspectors, I would like to thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking with you all and were impressed by your good behaviour and how well you got on with each other.

Younger children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress, especially in their speaking and listening and their personal and social development. Teachers and adults in your school look after you well. You do a good job in improving your school through, for instance, the school council and your work as librarians and 'Eco Warriors'. You feel safe at school and know that if you have a problem, there is always an adult to talk to. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and particularly like the range of clubs and other activities on offer, especially music and sports. The teaching is satisfactory, it is helping you to make satisfactory progress, and the extra help many of you receive has also helped you make progress especially in your reading.

Although you are making satisfactory progress, we think you could do even better. We have asked teachers to work together to make sure they give you opportunities to practise your writing and mathematics in topic lessons. We noticed that sometimes you find tasks too difficult or too easy. We have asked the school to make sure you are all given the right amount of challenge so that you can do your best. Some of you told us that you are not always certain about how to improve your work. We have asked the school to make sure teachers always give you this information when they mark your work.

The headteacher and staff are working hard to improve your school. You can all help too by continuing to work hard too and come to school regularly. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Tolley  
Lead inspector

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