



Holy Infant and St Anthony RC Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105219
LEA Bolton
Inspection number 277318
Inspection dates 19 September 2005 to 20 September 2005
Reporting inspector Mr Colin Smith CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Mitre Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Astley Bridge
Age range of pupils	5 to 11		Bolton, Lancashire BL1 6QJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01204 333111
Number on roll	193	Fax number	01204 333112
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Father Wright
Date of previous inspection	28 October 2003	Headteacher	Mrs C Lawton

Age group 5 to 11	Inspection dates 19 September 2005 - 20 September 2005	Inspection number 277318
-----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is a smaller than average primary school, which draws Catholic children from the area of Astley Bridge, on the outskirts of Bolton. The area includes a wide social mix of families. This is reflected in the average number of children receiving free school meals, although the proportion is increasing. The children are mainly white and all of them speak English, except for two who are currently attending a designated centre. The incidence of children with special educational needs is broadly average. Most children enter the school with attainment that is typical for their age. The school was found to have serious weaknesses at the time of the last inspection in October 2003. Since then, half of the teachers have changed. The local authority now recommends the school as a centre of good practice.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school has overcome its former serious weaknesses and now operates effectively, providing good value for money. This is evident in the strong leadership and management, the good quality of teaching and learning, the stimulating curriculum and in children's positive attitudes and good behaviour. These factors enable children to make good progress and standards are rising, not least because the more able children are now fulfilling their potential.

Teaching and learning are good in virtually all parts of the school. Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage and most reach or exceed the goals expected in all areas of learning by the end of the reception year.

Over the last two years, considerable improvements have been made. These are firmly rooted in a thorough analysis of what the school does well and where it can improve. This is why the school's evaluation of its own performance matches the findings of the inspection exactly. The headteacher's vision, energy and drive have moved the school forward significantly. There are no traces of complacency. The drive for excellence continues. These factors indicate that the school's good capacity to make improvements is firmly embedded in its work. Children's academic and personal needs are well catered for and their care, health and safety are assured. Parents and children appreciate all that the school provides. Although significant improvements have been made, further development is needed in the areas of provision for the gifted children, additional information for parents and in children's understanding of cultures other than their own.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to identify and make greater provision for the gifted children.
- Ensure that children develop an understanding of and respect for other cultures and beliefs.
- Provide parents with an opportunity to discuss the progress their children have made over the year.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children are now making good progress and standards are improving as the school rightly judges. Children make a good start in reception, particularly in their knowledge and understanding of the world, and most of them comfortably reach the early learning goals by the end of the reception year.

Higher up the school, standards had begun to decline, largely because the more able children were not fulfilling their potential. In November 2003, the new headteacher and staff implemented a sharply focused improvement plan. The strategies introduced had not had time to impact on the 2004 school results, which indicated that most children were making satisfactory progress and that standards in English, mathematics

and science were at the levels expected by the end of the infant and the junior years. However, it was clear that the more able children were still underachieving, particularly in the junior classes.

The picture changed in 2005. The challenging targets set were reached in English and science. Although the school's results have not yet been compared to schools nationally, there has been a 30% improvement. Almost all of the children reached the levels expected and half of them achieved the higher levels, which points to high standards in English and science. Results in mathematics changed little, but the reasons were carefully analysed to inform planning. Since September, strategies for improving mathematics lessons are making a difference and children are making better progress in this subject. Notably, children's literacy, numeracy, information and communications technology (ICT) and problem-solving skills are improving at a good rate because they are being developed in the learning of other subjects. Children are acquiring the tools for learning successfully.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school's ethos is warm and supportive, firmly founded in the Catholic faith. Children's moral and social development is correspondingly strong. Children are confident, courteous and have a very positive view of themselves and their school community. They enjoy school and derive pleasure and satisfaction from their work. Children find lessons interesting and want to learn. Attendance is consequently much higher than average. Attitudes are consistently positive, so no inappropriate behaviour was observed, and children showed consideration when moving around the building.

Cultural development is substantial, but not as salient as other aspects. Children's awareness of their heritage is apparent in stimulating historical role-play and their keen interest in photos and household items of days gone by. They have good knowledge of the Christian faith but are less aware of the cultural diversity of Britain today. Many children benefit from music, drama, and art provided in school, as well as from regular excursions to galleries, museums and concerts.

Children know how to live safely and healthily. Their awareness ranges from good diet and exercise to dangers such as drugs and keeping a safe distance from strangers. Their care for peace and happiness in the wider world and community is evident in many bright, informative displays around the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good, as the school assessed them to be. The school's success in teaching children with special educational needs has continued since the last inspection. However, the former weaknesses in the teaching of the more able children have been fully remedied. Lesson plans are now very specific about what

these children should learn. Consequently, the level of challenge has been greatly increased, particularly in writing and more recently in mathematics. The more able children, along with the others, are now learning successfully and thoroughly enjoying many interesting tasks provided for them. For example, the new reception children's delight in exploring soap bubbles provided a memorable start to their first few days in school.

The atmosphere for learning in lessons is very positive. Children are very well managed. They work hard and try their best. Underpinning the good teaching is the highly effective use of assessment. In this area, the school has made enormous strides in measuring children's learning and using the information to plan the next steps. Parents play an important part in supporting their children's learning. However, one formal parents' evening in the autumn is not enough for parents to learn how well their children have progressed over the school year.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provided, as the school asserts, is a good one. Accurate assessment of children's progress enables teachers to understand and cater for their different needs effectively. The vast majority of children are eager and happy learners because their personal and learning needs are well met. However, the school is only just beginning to consider the provision made for the gifted children. In this area there is still more to do.

The curriculum has improved significantly since the last inspection. Children now enjoy valuable opportunities to find out for themselves and participate in drama, which strengthens their understanding and injects fun into learning. Good support for children who find learning difficult helps them to improve their basic skills and more able children thrive on the higher level of challenge provided. The curriculum is enriched effectively by the good range of out-of-school activities and by including French, the arts and musical experiences, such as African drumming. The good personal, social and health education programme helps children to keep safe and stay healthy and prepares them well for the future. The school's Catholic ethos helps children to appreciate and make a valuable contribution to their community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school shows a good quality of care for its children. Assessment and target setting are impressive, enabling children to know how far they have progressed and how to improve further. Children fully appreciate teachers' helpful advice on taking the next step in their learning. They say these brief, supportive comments contribute greatly to their achievement.

The school shows strong concern for children's welfare and safety. Whole-school, group and individual needs are thoroughly understood, especially those of children with special educational needs. Staff are sensitive to children's feelings and anxieties,

including those of vulnerable children. They take particular care that all children are included in every aspect of school life.

Teachers vigorously promote independent learning, so children take and demonstrate responsibility for what they do. Children are closely supervised both in and out of school, with detailed risk assessments available when required. The school provides a secure, healthy working environment, ensuring that safety issues such as cutting with scissors in reception are carefully discussed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school correctly judges the quality of leadership and management to be good. This is chiefly due to the exceptional way the headteacher has turned the school round, despite the difficulties faced at the time of the last inspection. In particular, teamwork amongst staff and the willingness to try out new ideas have improved significantly. Subject leaders now know their subjects well, understand the quality of teaching and learning, correctly identify weaknesses and provide carefully structured plans for improvement.

Monitoring routines and procedures are rigorous and exacting. They focus precisely on the development of teaching methods, responding to different ways of learning and raising achievement and standards. The determination to meet children's diverse needs and include them all in the life and work of the school has led to much improved provision for the more able children. The school is rightly turning its attention to the needs of the gifted ones.

The headteacher is strongly supported by the school staff, the local authority, the diocese and relevant external agencies. She shares her clear vision for the school with them and has, in consequence, generated substantial means of realising it. The governors' contribution in encouraging staff and holding them to account has greatly increased. The school's success in raising standards is widely recognised, particularly by the award of leading school status within the authority.

Recruitment, induction, professional development and deployment of staff are all very well organised. Good accommodation is conducive to productive work and adequate resources are effectively used to provide good value for money.

The school's rapid rise from serious weaknesses to its current good standing shows convincingly its capacity for self-improvement.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for your help when we inspected your school. We enjoyed our stay and would like you to know what we found out.

- Your headteacher, staff and governors have created a good school for you to attend by making sure that everything is carefully checked to help you to make good progress.
- Your teachers and helpers are successful in helping you to learn new things.
- You do your part by coming to school regularly, behaving well and trying hard.
- We can see that you enjoy learning most of the time because lessons are interesting.
- Fortunately, you are well cared for in school and kept safe. Any children who need extra help are particularly well looked after.

Your school has improved a lot in the last two years and your teachers are trying to make the school even better. We think these things will help

- Teachers need to decide who the most gifted children are and then provide extra work to help them to achieve even more.
- You know a lot about your own backgrounds, but not really enough about other people's lives and beliefs, especially those from other cultures.
- Teachers work well with your parents, but an extra parents' evening later in the year would help them to find out how much progress you have made.