



St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Littleborough

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105816
LEA Rochdale
Inspection number 277417
Inspection dates 14 June 2006 to 15 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Adrian Simm CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Whitelees Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Featherstall
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Littleborough, Lancashire OL15 8DU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01706 378032
Number on roll	214	Fax number	01706 374829
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Eddie Miller
Date of previous inspection	12 June 2000	Headteacher	Mrs M Taylor

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is slightly smaller than other primary schools. Whilst it is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic school, it welcomes children from a range of faiths. The school is popular and serves a stable community. A very small percentage of pupils do not speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national figure. The school is part of a local authority programme for 'Sustaining Success'; it has a Healthy School Award for promoting healthy lifestyles to its children.

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 is accurate in its view that it provides pupils with a good quality of education. This is because the headteacher and deputy headteacher work together closely and are knowledgeable about the school. Strong teamwork has ensured that within its strengths are a number of outstanding features. For example: pupils' achievement in mathematics by Year 6; their behaviour and relationships; how sensibly they look after one another; their readiness for moving on to high school; and their community spirit. A high percentage of parents are complimentary about what the school offers. One parent whose child is about to move to high school wrote, 'the school does a wonderful job educating pupils academically and also giving them true and meaningful morals'.

From their start in the Nursery, where pupils' levels of attainment are around what would be expected, pupils achieve well. They quickly become confident learners because of the good quality of care and support offered. One parent wrote, 'I don't think children could have a better start to their educational life.' This start is built on effectively in the Reception so that, overall, children develop well in the Foundation Stage, many reaching the expected standards and a good number doing better than this.

Staff work hard and succeed in maintaining above average standards throughout the school to Year 6. All pupils achieve well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Attitudes and relationships are very good. Attendance is above average overall, with a good number of pupils attending very well. Pupils put into practice effectively what they learn about keeping safe and healthy lifestyles. The Sustaining Success project enables the school to celebrate this aspect of its work and share good practice with other schools. By the time pupils leave school they are mature, responsible and full of confidence.

The quality of teaching and learning is good as are the care, support and guidance that pupils receive. Staff development has ensured teachers are much more confident in teaching mathematics and in using information and communication technology (ICT) equipment, which is becoming more readily available to them. As a result, pupils' achievement has improved. The extremely supportive Friends, parents and teachers' association has contributed handsomely to equipping classrooms with high quality ICT resources.

The school has developed well since the last inspection, particularly in how well it checks on the progress of all pupils and how this information is used to make lessons better. This is supplemented by checking out the quality of teaching in lessons, although this is not as rigorous as it could be. The school's capacity to move on further is good. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

Introduce a sharper focus in checking on the quality of lessons and identify more precisely areas for development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Although children's attainment on entry to the Nursery is around average, a growing number need help with their personal and social development, and communication skills. The school's records show that children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception years, particularly in personal, social and emotional development. Although good progress is made in communication, language and literacy skills, they remain relatively weaker than other areas. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics in this year's Year 2 tests are the highest level for the last four years. Last year's leavers overall attained above average standards in the end of Key Stage 2 tests. Their results were exceptionally high in mathematics, where all pupils attained or exceeded what was expected of them. In English, however, a small number of the brighter pupils did not do quite as well as was expected. The school has analysed correctly the reasons for this and has programmes in place to improve both spelling and writing skills. This is already showing signs of success, particularly in Years 3 and 4.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have a very strong sense of right and wrong, a clear understanding of cultural diversity and choose actions based on a very well-developed social conscience. Year 6 pupils are mature for their age, and very well placed to benefit from secondary education. They know the targets set for them and are developing a clearer understanding of how to achieve them. Pupils are enthusiastic about learning and most enjoy school life to the full. The school council and Kids Fundraising Committee (KFC) play leading roles in the life of the school. One member of the KFC explained the supportive way in which teachers deal with 'telling you off'. 'They explain why actions are wrong so that you learn to improve'. One role of the school council is to discuss the outcomes of pupils' questionnaires. This has led to equipment being available for use at break and lunchtimes, resulting in a noticeable improvement in pupils' behaviour. Several parents report that rare instances of bullying are generally dealt with effectively; the current school council's view is that incidents tend to be 'silliness rather than bullying'. On balance, pupils' behaviour is a credit to parents and the school. Pupils' impressive contribution to the school community is balanced equally by everything they offer to the wider community, for example, in fundraising, selecting recipients of Harvest gifts, choir performances and membership of a local school's Children's Forum.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The lessons seen confirmed the accuracy of the headteacher's evaluations of teaching and learning as 'good with a small proportion moving towards outstanding'. In an excellent literacy lesson in the Years 5 and 6 class, pupils produced powerfully descriptive vocabulary in abundance when writing about the feelings of evacuees. School records show the focus on staff training in improving spelling and writing throughout the school is paying off. This is particularly the case in Years 3 and 4. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress well because of effective individual education plans (IEPs). These assist teachers and teaching assistants to continue in lessons with the effective work carried out by the special educational needs coordinator. Lessons are managed well, with clear indications of what pupils need to learn. All of these elements have a positive impact on pupils' learning. The marking of pupils' work is regular, supportive and becoming clearer in what pupils need to do next to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum impacts well on pupils' learning. Increased resources are directed towards areas identified for development such as science. This has been particularly effective in contributing to improved achievement throughout Years 3 to 6. The introduction of interactive whiteboards is a positive addition to the ICT provision and is enlivening the curriculum. Staff training and effort put into ensuring a very effective mathematics curriculum have paid off in pupils attaining consistently high standards by Year 6. A broad range of sporting and musical activities, including all Year 4 pupils learning to play the violin, enriches the curriculum. Pupils are taught well about healthy food options and encouraged to make positive lifestyle choices.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of pupils and all the required procedures for ensuring pupils' safety, including child protection, are in place. Overall, guidance and support for improving schoolwork and personal development are effective. The individual and small group support offered to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is strong. The school recognises the next step is to check even more precisely on how well these pupils' IEPs are supported in lessons. This will allow the school, from the Nursery to Year 6, to press on and build on pupils' already good achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, staff and governors work hard and successfully as a team to provide the best for every pupil. Performance is monitored effectively. School self evaluation is accurate. Teaching and learning are monitored comprehensively, through scrutiny of teachers' planning and analysing pupils' work. Lessons are regularly checked by a wide variety of staff who are becoming more confident in this aspect of their work. This is not yet rigorous enough if the school is to push on and further improve the quality of teaching and learning. Areas for development in lessons are not clearly identified frequently enough.

The governing body knows the school promotes good standards and that pupils achieve well. Several governors, including the chair of governors, have first hand knowledge of how the school works on a day-to-day basis. Governors trust the judgement of the headteacher but this does not prevent governors from seeking information to help them carry out their roles more strategically. The school carefully balances initiatives so as not to create 'overload'.

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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
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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	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	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 the very positive and mature views you gave about life at St Mary's. Will you please pass on my thanks to all of the children for the friendly reception we received.

We agree with you that you have a good school. You behave very well and generally have friendly relationships with each other and your teachers. Because there is little disruption, time in lessons is used well and you learn a great deal. This helps you to make good progress in your work and to become very mature young people by the time you move to high school. I know those of you I spoke to are looking forward to this move, perhaps with a little bit of anxiety. I am sure from what I saw you will be good ambassadors for St Mary's. Well done to the school council and the Kids Fundraising Committee for your efforts in improving the school. Hasn't the Friends, parents and teachers' association done well to provide you with the interactive whiteboards in your classrooms?

It is clear that Mrs Taylor, all the other staff, the governors and your parents want the best for you. To support this, we have asked that when you are in lessons, the school can be a little clearer about what will make your good lessons into even better ones. I think you may well have some ideas of your own about this.