



St Thomas More Roman Catholic Primary School, Rochdale

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105820
LEA Rochdale
Inspection number 277418
Inspection dates 20 March 2006 to 21 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Roger Gill CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Evesham Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Alkrington
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Middleton, Manchester M24 1PY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 6437132
Number on roll	315	Fax number	0161 6437132
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Tony Williams
Date of previous inspection	13 November 2000	Headteacher	Mr D McCorriston

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large Catholic school in an advantaged area of Rochdale. Some children come from further afield, giving the school a good social mix. The majority of children are of a white British background, with relatively few from minority ethnic heritages. A very small group is looked after in public care. The proportion of children that have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding elements, which matches exactly the school's own view of itself. Children's personal development is outstanding because the degree of care they receive is first-rate. Their contribution to the school community is excellent. Parents applaud the school wholeheartedly: as one wrote, 'our children have been given the best possible start academically, but also socially, emotionally and spiritually'. The Catholic ethos is realised daily. This is possible because all those involved with the school work together so closely. Children achieve well academically. The challenge for higher attaining children has been strengthened recently and their progress has been improved, particularly in English, mathematics and science (core subjects). Standards and quality in the Foundation Stage are good; children progress well and exceed the expected levels by the end of Reception.

Leadership and management are good. They have some top quality features, which produce higher standards, fewer children that find learning difficult and better results from able children in tests. This is the work of an effective team of leaders, including governors, who work in close harmony with each other. The good quality of teaching is occasionally outstanding when basic skills in English and mathematics are taught with precision, pace, skill and ambition. However, teaching is not as demanding in all subjects. Not enough is expected of higher attainers in subjects beyond English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (foundation subjects). The information gained from subjects like these is not yet used well enough to drive up standards. Progress has been good since the school was last inspected; it is poised to make even more improvements. The value for money provided is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve the provision in foundation subjects to ensure appropriate challenge for higher attaining children; and
- use the information from assessments in these subjects to check on standards, children's progress and where learning could be improved.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Children meet, and a significant minority exceed, the ambitious targets set for them in English and mathematics, because teaching is very well organised in the pursuit of high standards. All children progress well in the core subjects throughout the school, including those who find learning difficult and the few who are looked after in public care. Children enter the nursery with broadly average knowledge and skills. The good progress that children make in the Foundation Stage ensures that they exceed the standards expected for their age by the end of the Reception year; the rate of progress is quicker in literacy and numeracy. Standards in Year 2 are above average, particularly in reading and writing. Pupils attain above average standards by the end of Year 6. Standards in 2005 were exceptionally high

and achievement was consistently good. Children are very well equipped with the basic skills for work and future life in general. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) exceed national expectations and this represents good progress despite the cramped conditions in which children work. Progress is sound in other subjects, but those capable of more demanding work lack the challenge to extend and deepen their skills and knowledge. There are surges of progress when work is particularly exciting, for example, after a stimulating visit, when ICT is used as a tool for research or in physical education where provision is superb.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children are caring, responsible and thoughtful individuals who are extremely proud of their achievements. This exemplifies their outstanding personal development, which equips them strongly for future life and the workplace. Enjoyment of school is marked, which is reflected in children's above average attendance. A young child echoed the loyalty felt by all in saying, 'this is the best school in the world'. Parents appreciate that this is a very strong aspect. They realise correctly that behaviour and attitudes are first-rate. Children feel safe and are very respectful to each other; bullying is rare and dealt with effectively. The school council is extremely active, but it is the responsibility shown without direct supervision from adults which is really impressive. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional. Concern about moral and social issues expressed through the Eco Committee, for example, is deep seated. An awareness of many different cultures is woven very well in to personal development. Children's involvement in their school and local community is high. They respond eagerly to the excellent additional activities and benefit from stimulating visitors and educational visits. Children's desire to keep healthy is demonstrated by their widespread involvement in the many sporting activities on offer.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are consistently good across the school. Parents feel very involved in their children's progress: the school makes every effort to give them detailed information about how they can help at home. The grouping of children by attainment in Years 1 to 4 is an innovation that is paying dividends. Some outstanding teaching takes place. In one mathematics lesson, for example, Year 3 and Year 4 children juggled confidently positive and negative numbers. They created sequences of these numbers at a level expected of bright Year 6 pupils. This kind of teaching has pace and high expectations. Good teaching contains these elements, for the most part, but does not always stretch higher attainers so well. Learning gets off to a good start in the Foundation Stage. Teaching in the nursery and reception classes is superbly organised to promote rapid improvement in literacy and numeracy. The assessment of children's work, throughout the school, is thorough and used well to determine areas of

improvement in the core subjects. Those who find learning difficult benefit well from this, particularly since they are so well supported by teaching assistants. However, this is not consistently the case for the highest attaining pupils in other subjects, which limits their otherwise good achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum meets requirements and focuses strongly on raising standards in literacy and numeracy. Work is planned very well for children at different levels of attainment. The school has recently sought to achieve excellence in the core subjects. It now wisely wants to concentrate its efforts on improving provision across the curriculum so that all subjects provide enough challenge. French is an addition that is part of a wide range of enrichment activities that make pupils' learning more exciting. Moreover, there are excellent opportunities for pupils to engage in sport both within the school day and in after school activities. For example, 85 children take part regularly in swimming after school. These opportunities contribute very strongly to a healthy lifestyle. Education about sex and drugs is a firm feature of the curriculum that helps children acquire positive attitudes to keeping healthy and staying safe.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, support and guidance that children receive is outstanding and a strength of the school's provision. There is a powerful commitment from all staff to ensure that children achieve well and make strong strides in personal development. Health and safety checks and risk assessments are undertaken regularly; all staff have been trained in first aid procedures. The arrangements for child protection procedures are in place and adults are aware of the procedures to follow if they have a concern. The support for looked after children in public care is of high quality. Children who find learning difficult receive well co-ordinated support and very helpful guidance from teachers and their assistants. Pupils are guided very well in how to improve their work. Older children receive outstanding personalised counselling in this respect. The support children receive at points of transfer, for example, to secondary school, is highly effective in boosting confidence.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Outstanding aspects have resulted in raised standards recently. Administratively, the school runs like clockwork: this allows appropriate emphasis on children's learning. Moreover, the influence of leadership on children's personal development is immense. This creates a groundswell of confidence and pride throughout the school. The headteacher's great ability to inspire others enables his senior colleagues to develop professionally and take decisions. Teaching has been strengthened, for example, in its use of innovative programmes of work to

improve literacy and numeracy. Furthermore, the deputy headteacher has undertaken a great deal of training that has a direct bearing on the school's improvement. Governors play their part admirably in terms of supporting, encouraging and strategic planning. Thus, standards and achievement are improving, demonstrating the school's capacity to continue to better its performance. The struggle to improve the building and facilities for ICT is a testament to the governors' determination.

Self-evaluation is accurate and harnesses very well the views of parents and children. Information is analysed closely to highlight where improvements are needed. The school monitors the quality of teaching thoroughly and regularly to identify its strengths and relative weaknesses. Subject leaders are now involved well in the process of review and display good skills of analysis. They know their next step: to improve the relative weaknesses in some subjects and use assessments, in them, to make learning more effective and achievement as good as it is in core subjects.

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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?	1	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?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	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	1	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	1	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?	1	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	1	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 thoroughly enjoyed our visit because everyone was so helpful and friendly. We would like to share with you what we thought.

These are some of the things that we enjoyed:

- your good achievement in English, mathematics, science and ICT
- you always enjoy lessons and the extra-curricular activities
- the way you all rise to the responsibilities given by the school
- you try very hard to follow your teachers' advice about improving your work
- you are fascinated with ICT and will soon have a brand new suite
- your kindness to each other is remarkable.

We know everyone wants to do even better and we have suggested some things that we think will help:

- your teachers need to improve lessons in foundation subjects to make sure that work matches the abilities and talents of all children
- your headteacher and senior staff need to check on these subjects to make sure that you are doing well enough and getting good advice about how to improve.