



St Mary's Catholic Primary School Marple Bridge

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106123
LEA Stockport
Inspection number 277493
Inspection dates 17 May 2006 to 18 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Arthur Markham CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Lowry Drive
School category	Voluntary aided		Marple Bridge
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Stockport, Cheshire SK6 5BR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 4277498
Number on roll	241	Fax number	0161 4490458
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs V Major
Date of previous inspection	31 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Fionuala Boucher

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3 to 11	17 May 2006 - 18 May 2006	277493

© 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

This is an average size school situated in a prosperous suburb of Stockport, but, as a church school, serves a community more widespread than its immediate surroundings. Most pupils are of white British background with a small number from minority ethnic groups. Few pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The number claiming free school meals is below average, as is the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. When they start in the Nursery the majority of children have average level skills.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school, which gives outstanding value for money. Inspectors feel that the school has underestimated its performance. Children enter the school with average skills overall and make a very good start in the Foundation Stage where, due to good provision, most achieve the levels expected for this age group and a good number exceed them. Pupils make outstanding progress during their time at the school to achieve exceptionally high standards by the end of Year 6. This is because teaching is outstanding. In most lessons, teachers stimulate pupils' interest by their lively explanations and presenting them with challenging activities, although this is not as evident in a few less successful lessons. The outstanding curriculum is enhanced by a very rich range of activities and visits. Pupils consequently enjoy school and have very good attitudes to learning. Their behaviour is excellent. The school takes extremely good care of pupils and their personal development is outstanding. Parents rate the school very highly, one commenting, 'An excellent school all round, offering the educational, social and spiritual needs I wish my children to have'.

The school is very well led and managed. The very clear direction provided by the recently appointed headteacher has developed a strong team approach. Improvement planning is good because effective monitoring and evaluation enable areas for development to be accurately identified.

Governors support and challenge the school very well. The issues from the last inspection have been successfully addressed and standards maintained at an exceptionally high level. The capacity for further improvement is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

In order to build on its many strengths and improve standards further, the school should:

- make use of the examples of outstanding teaching in the school to improve the quality of the small amount of less successful teaching.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding and standards are exceptionally high. Pupils make outstanding progress during their time at the school. Children's skills when they enter the Nursery are varied but are average overall. They make a very good start in the Foundation Stage because activities are well planned and stimulating. Pupils' performance in national tests at both Year 2 and Year 6 has been maintained at a consistently high level over the last five years with many pupils reaching the higher levels. The strong emphasis given to ensuring that pupils achieve so well is reflected by the action being taken to raise standards in mathematics even higher. In the 2005 Year 6 national tests, standards in mathematics were well above average, but were not quite as high as those in English and science, which were very high. Pupils'

performance was carefully analysed to identify the reasons for this and initiatives were introduced which are already impacting on standards. Close attention is given to ensuring that all pupils achieve the challenging targets they are set. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported and make outstanding progress, as do the few pupils who speak English as an additional language. Pupils who are gifted or talented achieve outstandingly because they too are suitably challenged. Pupils' outstanding development of the skills of literacy and numeracy stand them in good stead for the world of work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. They really enjoy coming to school and are motivated and enthusiastic about their learning. Attendance levels are very high. Pupils know how to keep safe and the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles. They readily discuss ways in which they are encouraged to make a positive contribution to the community and are very keen to help those less fortunate than themselves. They take on fundraising activities for a number of causes and also raise money for extra resources in their own classrooms, demonstrating a very good sense of contribution to the school and wider communities. Pupils' behaviour is excellent: they show trust and respect for adults and for one another. Incidents of bullying are extremely rare, and pupils speak with great confidence about appropriate ways of dealing with any unpleasantness. The school council provides opportunities for pupils to offer their opinions and help to effect changes in school. For example, a recent request for a covered area with seating in the playground resulted almost immediately in a new, pleasant sheltered area. Pupils develop strong personal and social skills, self-esteem, spiritual awareness and a strong sense of right and wrong, which prepare them well for the next phase of their education and for their later lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. This is a major factor in the high achievement of pupils. Teachers' expectations are high and in most lessons pupils are stimulated by the challenging work they are set. The very few less effective lessons, where teaching is only satisfactory, are the consequence of teachers not doing this as successfully. However, in the large majority of lessons, teachers take care to ensure that their explanations capture pupils' interest and they use questions well to ensure that pupils understand what they have to do. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning and work very hard, one saying, 'Teachers make lessons fun and help you if you're stuck.' Relationships are very good and teachers give close attention to developing pupils' self-esteem and confidence. This generates a pleasant atmosphere in lessons and pupils behave very well. As one parent so aptly stated, 'I'm absolutely thrilled with

our children's progress, attitude and passion towards school.' Teaching assistants give very good support to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who consequently make outstanding progress. The effective use of the high quality specialist teaching in science, music and physical education promotes good standards in these subjects. Teachers monitor pupils' progress closely by assessing their work carefully and making good use of positive comments to develop their self-esteem and confidence.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and meets the needs of all pupils very well. Pupils experience a broad curriculum, enriched with opportunities to learn three modern languages and a variety of musical instruments. There is very good sports provision, which supports the school's participation in the Healthy School Award project. Pupils take part in competitions and festivals, and this enhances the level of challenge for gifted and talented youngsters. Provision in information and communication technology is much improved since the last inspection and pupils are given opportunities to use computers effectively in many subjects. Work in classrooms is brought to life through the use of visitors and visits to places of interest. Older pupils take part in a residential visit to an outdoor education centre, which has a positive effect on their personal and social development. The curriculum for the youngest pupils ensures all areas of learning are covered well, with good opportunities for outdoor activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding care, guidance and support provided for pupils make a very significant contribution towards their personal development and progress. Adults in the school listen carefully to pupils, making them feel valued and actively encouraging them to ask for help when they need it. As one teacher commented, 'Learning is about being able to say I need a bit more help.' Health and safety and child protection procedures are outstanding. Staff work hard and very successfully to support the needs of each child, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils in Year 6 are paired with new starters in the Reception class and develop special friendships, which result in younger children quickly settling into the school routine. Pupils feel well supported in their academic development. Effective systems are in place to track individual progress and to set targets for improvements. Parents are invited to share in weekly open assemblies celebrating the unique contribution which every child has to offer.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The recently appointed headteacher is providing strong leadership and has a clear vision of how she wants to take the school

forward. Her enthusiasm and drive are giving a strong impetus to school improvement. There is a determined team approach within the staff, governors and parents, who all work effectively together to ensure the provision of high quality education for pupils. Governors support and challenge the school very well. A number are in school regularly and have a clear appreciation of the quality of the school's work. Relations with parents are very good and their views are taken into account in planning future developments. 'We are encouraged to be involved and our opinions are sought and valued,' is a view shared by many. The school is not complacent. Because self-evaluation is effective, it knows the aspects of pupils' work that can be even better. For example, raising pupils' achievement even further in mathematics has been accurately identified. The school improvement plan is well drafted and clearly outlines the action to be taken in the areas for development. Finances are very carefully managed and the school is well resourced. The effective deployment of staff with specialist subject expertise results in high quality teaching in subjects such as science, music and physical education.

The school has successfully maintained the high level performance found at the last inspection and under the determined leadership of the headteacher has a very strong capacity for further 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?	1	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	1	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?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	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?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	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?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	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	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	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

As you know, two inspectors recently visited your school to find out how well your teachers are helping you with your learning. Thank you for being so friendly and talking to the inspectors. We enjoyed being in your school and listening to what you had to say. The things that we particularly liked were:

- the way you work hard for your teachers and make outstanding progress to achieve exceptionally high standards
- the way your headteacher runs the school; she listens to what you all think could make it better and works hard to make the changes happen
- the way all the staff take such good care of you
- your excellent behaviour in lessons and around the school and the way you help each other.

We think you have an outstanding school, but we have asked your teachers to improve one thing to make your school even better. We want them to:

- make all lessons interesting and stimulating so that you enjoy your learning even more.

Thank you for helping us so much with the inspection of your school. We all hope that you will continue to work hard in school and help the teachers so that St Mary's Catholic Primary becomes an even better school.