



St Raphael's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106242
LEA Tameside
Inspection number 277516
Inspection dates 22 May 2006 to 23 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Sarah Drake CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Huddersfield Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Millbrook
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Stalybridge, Cheshire SK15 3JL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 3384095
Number on roll	158	Fax number	0161 3039724
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Peter Casey
Date of previous inspection	11 September 2000	Headteacher	Mr Brendan Marley

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Raphael's is a small school that serves an area to the north east of Stalybridge. Higher than average numbers of pupils are eligible for a free school meal but slightly below average numbers have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A small number of pupils in the Foundation Stage are at an early stage of learning English; the great majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The headteacher has been in post for over three years and the deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2005. Despite accommodation difficulties, increasing numbers of pupils are entering the Foundation Stage year on year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Raphael's is a good and improving school as the school itself accurately judges. It gives good value for money. Pupils of all ages make good progress. Standards are rising and were among the most improved in the country in 2005. Standards in English and information and communication technology (ICT) are particularly strong. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their excellent behaviour and mature awareness of others' needs ensures that the school operates as a harmonious, happy community. Good quality teaching and a well enriched curriculum mean that pupils enjoy their learning, develop good study skills and have a clear understanding of how to improve their work. Assessment procedures are good but staff do not yet analyse sufficiently well the information they now have about pupils' progress. Staff know pupils as individuals and support them well so that they feel comfortable in school and can concentrate on learning. However, procedures to ensure health and safety are unsatisfactory because the school does not conduct sufficiently rigorous internal risk assessments or take effective action. The overall quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are good. Both staff and children cope extremely well with the inadequate accommodation which restricts movement and the activities that are available. Parents regard the school highly and support their children's learning well through, for instance, ensuring that homework is completed. Strong leadership and management, together with effective partnership with the local authority, have underpinned the good improvement since the last inspection. However, as recognised by the school, its internal improvement planning is not sufficiently well developed. The school has an accurate view of its own strengths and areas for development and, with the good teamwork now in place, has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- As a matter of urgency, improve the Foundation Stage accommodation.
- Ensure that the required risk assessment procedures are in place.
- Establish a whole school plan that identifies priorities for future development and clear success criteria related to raising pupils' achievement even further.
- Build on its assessment procedures to ensure pupils' progress is suitably charted and relevant action taken throughout the year.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards and achievement are good. Children enter the Nursery with average skills for their age. Despite the inadequate accommodation, they make good progress in the Foundation Stage so that by the end of Reception year the great majority reach the expectations for their age and many exceed these.

In the 2005 statutory tests, Year 2 pupils reached slightly above average standards in reading but below average levels in writing and mathematics because none gained the higher level in these areas. Year 6 pupils reached above average standards in English,

mathematics and science. More than half the year group gained the higher level in English. Good quality teaching and improved assessment procedures helped these pupils to build well on the above average standards that they achieved in Year 2. The school exceeded its challenging targets except for the percentage of pupils gaining the higher level in mathematics. Standards have been on an upward trend since 2002.

Pupils throughout the school, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the very few for whom English is an additional language, make good progress. Standards in English and ICT are impressive. Year 2 results are predicted to rise in the 2006 tests and Year 6 pupils are on track to reach the challenging targets that have been set for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding, rather than good as judged by the school. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. Pupils are friendly, helpful, confident and polite, all of which creates a happy, orderly environment for learning. Foundation Stage children learn good cooperative and collaborative skills from a very early age and cope extremely well with the cramped accommodation. Older pupils are reflective about life, have a mature ability to imagine themselves in another's situation and a good understanding of fairness. For example, the school council has recently organised an access rota for the all-weather pitch. Assemblies are lively, thought provoking and promote a strong sense of community enriched by high quality singing.

Pupils' behaviour is exceptionally good. They move around the difficult site safely and show patience when waiting for others. Playtimes and lessons run smoothly because pupils can be trusted to act sensibly. They enjoy being at school and relationships are of high quality. Pupils like each other's company and genuinely value others' contributions. Their appreciation of their own culture is strong and their awareness of the richness of other communities is developing. Pupils enjoy exercise and understand about healthy living. They develop very good attitudes towards learning and the skills required to study effectively. These prepare them well for the next stage of their education and future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. In Years 5 and 6 there is some outstanding practice. Lessons are well planned and usually lively, with activities that capture pupils' interest and are suited to their different abilities. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, use ICT and subject specific language particularly well and generally give clear explanations. Very good relationships and behaviour create a supportive learning environment in which pupils collaborate well. They have good study skills, take care

with their presentation and understand that learning is a serious but enjoyable matter. Especially in the Foundation Stage, teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to children's learning, although in a minority of lessons their skills are not used to best advantage during the whole class session.

Marking is regular, informative and teachers ensure that pupils understand their literacy and numeracy targets. The recently established programme of testing and assessment provides clear information on pupils' progress. However, there are no mid-year progress reviews and no formal analysis of data. This limits the school's ability to ensure that individuals are making equally good progress across a range of subjects and to use its data to inform its curriculum planning for groups of different ability.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is broad, balanced and underpinned by good provision in English and mathematics. The very effective way in which ICT is used to enhance learning across a broad range of subjects including, for example, art programs in religious education, ensures that pupils acquire impressive skills in this area. Specialist teaching in French for pupils of all ages, physical education and music enhance the curriculum, as does the range of extra activities at lunchtime and after school. Increasing numbers of visits, including the recent Parisian residential for Year 5 and 6, further enrich pupils' learning. Personal, social and health education is taught within other subjects, but formal schemes of work have not yet been developed for this subject so the school cannot be certain that all areas are covered in sufficient depth. Overcrowded accommodation and incomplete development of the outdoor area greatly restrict learning opportunities in the Foundation Stage, although all staff work hard to overcome these limitations.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Much of the school's care, guidance and support for pupils is of good quality but overall its care is only satisfactory because risk assessment of in-school provision is lacking. There has been insufficient action to tackle problems created by the leaking roof and overcrowded conditions in the Foundation Stage accommodation.

Parents appreciate the supportive Catholic ethos and they are kept well informed through, for instance, regular meetings and now also electronic communication. They and pupils are confident that, if they approach staff with concerns, they will be dealt with swiftly and effectively. This is an orderly school and there is zero tolerance of aggressive or racist behaviour. The breakfast club provides a welcoming start to the day. Staff respond very sensitively to pupils' moods and family circumstances. Pupils are clear about how to improve their work. Regularly reviewed individual education plans and in-class support ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Procedures to ensure child protection are in place, including safe staff and volunteer recruitment, and everyone knows their responsibilities. The risks posed by educational visits are suitably assessed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Since his arrival, the headteacher has successfully ensured that all the school's actions are sharply focused on raising pupils' achievement. He has established a common sense of purpose among staff and introduced assessment systems that chart individual pupils' progress. Through the school's voluntary involvement in the authority's Intensifying Support Programme (ISP), staff have become very clear about where to direct their attention and how to gauge the effectiveness of actions. Good access to training has helped them develop the necessary skills to ensure that provision is cohesive across the school. The new deputy headteacher brings complementary skills to the school, particularly in relation to enhancing pupils' literacy skills and their enjoyment in learning. Leadership of the Foundation Stage and ICT is strong. The school is far from complacent and rightly understands the need to make better use of the information now available from assessing pupils' work to direct its further actions. Currently, there is no improvement plan to guide its development when its ISP involvement ends.

The school runs smoothly and financial management is good. Successful funding applications have financed the all-weather pitch and the recently installed ICT suite. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are supportive of the school and monitor its finances particularly closely. However, they have not ensured that risk assessments are conducted suitably or that the Foundation Stage accommodation is fit for purpose. The school fulfils well its Mission Statement to ensure that all pupils 'Care, Share and Learn Together.' It has made good progress since the previous inspection and there is good capacity to improve further.

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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?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	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	2	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?	3	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	3	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	3	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	No
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 making us so welcome in your school and for being so ready to talk with us. Your views are important since you are the experts about what it is like to be a pupil at St Raphael's. We enjoyed our time with you and were particularly pleased to see that:

- you enjoy learning and are developing good skills to help you make the most of your time in lessons
- you build very good relationships and take good account of other people
- your behaviour is excellent which helps to create a happy environment
- your teachers plan interesting things for you to do and help you understand how to improve your work so you make good progress
- your standards in English and ICT are particularly strong
- your teachers and other staff offer you good quality support and guidance
- your headteacher and other staff have helped the school to improve well over recent years.

This is what we have asked the school to do next to make it even better:

- improve the accommodation for the youngest pupils
- make sure that staff identify hazards and take suitable action to provide a healthy and safe environment
- create a plan to guide future school developments and make it possible to judge their success
- make better use of the information staff collect about the standards you achieve to help you make the best possible progress through the year.

Your job is to continue to enjoy learning and working hard.