



St Mary's RC Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106252
Local Authority Tameside
Inspection number 277519
Inspection dates 21–22 November 2006
Reporting inspector Allan Torr HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Kynder Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Denton
Age range of pupils	3–11		Manchester M34 2AR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 3363322
Number on roll (school)	278	Fax number	0161 3205187
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Rev V Cavey
		Headteacher	Ms Reeves
Date of previous school inspection	27 November 2000		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 21–22 November 2006	Inspection number 277519
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average primary school is in the centre of Denton and expanded as a result of the closure of a neighbouring primary school in 2005. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. There are few children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities including those with statements of special educational need. The school has links with a local day nursery to offer a holiday, breakfast and after school club. The school achieved Active Mark in 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with good features. The school has a distinctly Christian ethos which runs through everything that it does. It is popular with parents and pupils, who are placed firmly at the heart of its work.

The school has taken steps to tackle the weaknesses identified in the last inspection. The headteacher was appointed just over two years ago and the deputy headteacher just over a year ago. Governors, parents and pupils report that improvement has taken place in that time. A typical parental comment was that the headteacher, 'has really improved the school in the short time she has been here'. The senior staff have also tackled matters that were the concerns of parents and pupils such as bullying and the condition of the toilets.

Pupils make satisfactory progress overall. They start school at a typical standard for their age and make at least satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception). Progress is good in Key Stage 1 and overall, by the end of Year 2, standards are a little above average. In Key Stage 2, pupils make very good progress in English, reaching well above average standards. Although standards in mathematics have risen in recent years, progress in mathematics is simply satisfactory. By the end of Year 6, standards are a little above average in mathematics and broadly average in science. The school introduced measures to track pupils' progress and to monitor quality of teaching and learning. The school has good capacity for further improvement.

Teaching is satisfactory overall with some that is good. Reading is taught particularly well and in Key Stage 2 pupils learn to write in a mature style for their age. Marking of pupils' work varies. Sometimes, it does not show them how to do better, particularly in mathematics and the foundation subjects. The curriculum covers all that is required but has not yet been planned to take full account of all pupils' interests or to ensure that skills improve steadily in some subjects.

The school takes good care of pupils and enables them to make good progress in their personal development. This is achieved through the school's caring Catholic ethos and the good opportunities it provides for pupils to get involved in the community and develop empathy for others. Pupils enjoy their education and are keen to contribute in lessons. Attendance is above average. The staff work well with a range of outside agencies to promote pupils' health and well-being and pupils respond well to this provision. Pupils develop workplace skills such as teamwork and cooperation and good skills in literacy and information and communication technology (ICT).

The school is led and managed well. The headteacher's drive and vision have been central to its improvement. She has accurately identified what needs to be improved and has put a good plan in place to move the school forward. In close partnership with senior teachers and governors, she is taking the school in the right direction.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' progress in mathematics and science.

- Raise the quality of learning by improving marking and the setting of targets for pupils.
- Improve the progression of pupils' skills in the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

When pupils start school their attainment is broadly average for their age, though lower in early literacy skills. By the end of Year 6 standards are above average overall, though this masks a significant variation between subjects with standards in English being higher than those in mathematics and science. Taken overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

Pupils get a good start in the Foundation Stage and they make good progress in Key Stage 1. By the end of Key Stage 1, they reach broadly average standards in reading and mathematics. This is good achievement in reading and satisfactory in mathematics. In writing, standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have been around average for several years but in 2006 the more able did not achieve as well as they should have done.

In Key Stage 2, the school has been very successful at raising standards in English and, despite some year-on-year variations, standards have improved significantly over four years and are now well above average. Pupils' progress in English is good, however, in mathematics and science, progress slows in this key stage. Although standards are a little above average, there is evidence of some underachievement. The school has now introduced measures to improve pupils' rate of progress and these have started to have an impact on the legacy of underachievement.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Their achievement is aided by suitable individual education plans, which are reviewed regularly, and by working closely with support agencies.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

In the school's caring Catholic ethos pupils make good progress in their personal development. They learn the personal skills needed to make the most of secondary education and to contribute to the community.

Behaviour is generally good. Recent measures introduced by the school to tackle bullying have been successful and pupils say they feel safe and free from intimidation or harassment. Pupils take responsibility, for example, as 'kind kids' in our 'playground pals' scheme and as representatives on the anti-bullying and litter buster groups. Pupils enjoy school, have a good attitude to learning and are keen to contribute in lessons. This was confirmed by comments from them and their parents and carers. Attendance is above average and has risen significantly since 2003.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Spirituality pervades the school and has a positive impact on pupils' well-being and their empathy with

others in the local community, nationally and internationally. Pupils make good contributions to the community; they have the opportunity to raise funds, for example, for a local hospice. They also instigated a campaign against toy guns, which were fired outside the school. Pupils contribute to school life. They are consulted and their views are considered but steps to provide a forum for this have been taken only recently. Elections are planned for pupils to select representatives for the school council.

Pupils develop a good awareness of how to keep safe and be healthy for example, by attending a Crucial Crew event run by the local authority. Pupils develop healthy lifestyles through taking regular exercise at play and lunchtimes and in physical education lessons. They generally eat healthily and take up opportunities to drink water regularly and to eat fresh fruit provided by the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but good in English. This was evident from the lessons seen, examination of pupils' books and pupils' achievement. They are taught comprehension and advanced reading skills very effectively. Teachers' knowledge of how to teach English and how to develop pupils' skills is good.

Lessons are well planned and structured and are generally well paced. Interactive whiteboards and other resources are used well to enhance learning. Homework, supported well by parents, extends pupils' knowledge and understanding. The teacher's relationships with pupils are good and through good questioning skills, they guide pupils well to reach the correct answer. The content of some lessons and the work which pupils are asked to do is not always matched closely enough to their learning needs or their interests. This is often because teachers rely too heavily on programmes of work without adapting them suitably for their pupils. The result is slower than expected progress.

The deployment of teaching assistants is a strength. They are skilled and are used well to guide and teach individuals and groups of pupils. Changes to improve the learning environment for pupils have started, however, pupils' progress in science and the foundation subjects is hampered by the cramped condition of some classrooms.

Teachers make good use of a range of techniques to check pupils' learning during lessons. They mark pupils' work but this marking too rarely helps pupils to improve. As a result, in some cases pupils make repeat errors and reinforce mistakes and misunderstandings. Information gained from assessments and from marking is not always used to guide teachers' planning of lessons. Pupils respond well to teachers' praise and to the award of house points.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. It is well mapped to ensure that all pupils cover the units of work during each key stage. The curriculum is based on content rather than skills and there is no system in place to ensure that pupils develop skills progressively as they get older. Subjects have generally not been adapted to suit the interests of pupils and although some links are made between subjects, this is not yet fully developed.

The curriculum is enriched well by trips and visits and by visitors coming into school. For example, in science, every class goes on a trip to develop and extend their understanding of a unit of work. Pupils' personal, social, cultural and citizenship education is enhanced by a governor who teaches Year 6 about refugees and asylum seekers. He arranges for pupils to meet and to talk to some refugees.

Extra-curricular opportunities are good and participation rates are high. There is a range of activities for pupils including playing board games, sport clubs such as basketball and cross country and cultural clubs such as musical theatre, choir and instrument tuition.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall but guidance and support for improving pupils' work are not as strong as pastoral guidance. The school cares for pupils very well. This is seen particularly in its response to the needs of those who are vulnerable or who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the school's good partnership with other agencies. Procedures for risk assessment and child protection have been recently updated and now meet requirements. Governors play an active role in overseeing health and safety matters.

Induction and transition procedures are managed well. Pupils benefit from strong links with the local secondary school, for example through the sports' partnership and curriculum support for ICT, modern foreign languages and mathematics for the more able in Year 6.

The academic guidance and support provided for pupils is adequate. Some pupils have targets but are unsure about exactly what they need to do to improve their work. Recent improvements have enabled the school to track pupils' progress but the link between assessment, targets and marking work are unclear.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The school's mission statement to 'create a caring Christian community of learning' is reflected in its work. The headteacher takes the lead role in setting and establishing the ethos and she is supported well by a

capable deputy headteacher. The senior team is driving the school forward with the focus on pupils' all round progress.

The improvement plan is precise and well focused as a result of accurate and analytical self-evaluation by the school. Resources are used and managed satisfactorily to ensure that the school's priorities are met. A good building plan, for example, has allocated resources to the refurbishment and improvement of the learning environment, which is at present, hampering some learning.

The contribution of teachers with responsibility for leading and managing the school's work in the various subjects varies. In the best cases, teachers know how well pupils are doing and have established good measures to improve attainment and progress. In several subjects the leaders' role in relation to the development of the curriculum and teaching is underdeveloped.

The school's systems for keeping track of how well pupils are doing has improved in the last two years. The monitoring systems now in place to evaluate teaching and learning are good. The recently introduced arrangements for tracking pupils' progress as they move up the school are equally good

Governance is good. The governing body recognises where things had slipped and works in close partnership with staff, particularly the headteacher. Governors visit the school regularly, are well informed about its performance and fulfil the role of critical friend well.

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

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for letting the inspectors look at your work during your school's inspection and for talking to us so openly about your school.

There are a number of things that the school does well.

- The school teaches English well so that you make very good progress and the standards most of you reach are above average at the end of Year 6.
- You make a good contribution to the community through fundraising and becoming involved in your local area.
- You get good advice and help to be safe and healthy.
- Most of you enjoy school and have good attendance.
- Your headteacher and senior teachers are leading the school well.
- The school communicates well with your parents, for example through newsletters and through the good school website.

I have asked the staff and governors to improve some things.

- Speed up the progress that you make in mathematics and in science.
- Give good feedback and set targets so that you know how to improve your work.
- Make sure work in all subjects is planned to be interesting for you and to get harder as you get older.

I know that most of you enjoy lessons and that you have started to have a say in how the school runs. I hope that you continue to express your views so that the school can improve further.