



St John Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117475
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 280088
Inspection dates 18–19 October 2006
Reporting inspector Rashida Sharif HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Berry Lane Mill End, Mill End Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire WD3 7HG
School category	Community	Telephone number	01923774004
Age range of pupils	5–11	Fax number	01923710915
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Chair	Mrs Amanda O'Brien
Number on roll (school)	207	Headteacher	Mrs Paula Smith
Appropriate authority	The governing body		
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 1999		

Age group 5–11	Inspection dates 18–19 October 2006	Inspection number 280088
--------------------------	-----------------------------------------------	------------------------------------

© 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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors over two days.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average oversubscribed Catholic school that serves the residents of four parishes. The school is situated in a busy residential area of Rickmansworth. All pupils are full time and are arranged into seven single aged classes including the Reception class. Most pupils are White British and several are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The attainment on entry of the majority of pupils is above average and very few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is below average. The school is currently working towards the Healthy Schools Quality Mark.

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 that provides a good quality of education and care for its pupils. It is deservedly well regarded locally. The school sees itself in the same way and has good evidence to support this view. Continuous improvement and the personal well-being of its pupils lie at the heart of the school's aims. This is an inclusive school where pupils' attitudes, behaviour and attendance are outstanding, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There were many very positive comments on the work of the school in parents' responses to the questionnaire. The school was praised for providing 'a caring environment that encourages a good sense of community'. Pupils are very happy, feel safe and trust staff to deal with their concerns.

The curriculum is good and it is well matched to the abilities and interests of pupils. Pupils appreciate the good range of other activities and events, for example, sports, science and chess clubs which further broaden their experiences and build their confidence. In lessons, pupils are attentive, concentrate fully and as a result they achieve well. They also benefit from good teaching where lessons are well organised and pupils know what they are expected to learn. There is a good match of activities to suit the needs of all learners and teachers have high expectations for pupils to complete their work to a good standard.

Pupils' standards of work are outstanding. Challenging targets and effective teaching in Years 5 and 6 mean that pupils reach high standards in mathematics, English and science. The school has good systems for the induction of children into the Reception class. In their first weeks at school, staff in the Foundation Stage help children to settle in quickly, so that they become confident and are ready to learn. Staff assess children accurately as early as possible to establish their starting points. This information is used effectively and consequently children make good progress. Pupils continue to make good progress throughout the school. In particular teachers identify pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities promptly and they receive good support and make good progress.

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Pupils value the programme of personal, social and health education. They know the difference between healthy and unhealthy foods extremely well. There are good systems in place for tracking pupils' progress; however pupils do not have enough opportunities to evaluate for themselves how well they are doing. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and pupils and parents report that teachers 'always try to help them to improve'.

Leadership, management and governance of the school are good and have brought about continuing improvement in the last twelve months, leading to consistently high standards and pupils' good progress. With the support of her recently restructured management team, the headteacher provides strong leadership and clear direction. The role of subject leaders is still to be further developed to ensure consistency of practice, such as in planning for improvement. Through increasingly effective monitoring procedures, the senior management have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas of further development, such as to raise the quality of

teaching and learning further. They recognise that the quality of pupils' handwriting varies between classes because the school does not yet have a clear policy about how it should be taught.

Good leadership and management are reflected in accurate and effective self-evaluations of the school's work. It has a good capacity to improve. Given the quality of provision and pupils' good achievement, the school gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning by extending the best practice.
- Increase the opportunities for pupils to evaluate for themselves how well they are doing.
- Improve the consistency of subject leadership.
- Improve pupils' handwriting skills in all age groups.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The standards pupils reach are outstanding and pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. From the time they start in Reception, pupils make consistently good progress. By the end of Year 2 attainment is above the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' good progress continues. As a result, the proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching the higher than expected level 5 in their national tests is exceptional in English, mathematics and science. The school's national test results for pupils in Year 6 in 2006 were the best the school has had. The quality of pupils' handwriting varies between classes. There is no significant difference between the progress made by pupils from minority ethnic groups or between girls and boys.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal growth, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, as is their behaviour. One of the many imaginative features of the school is the 'prayer garden' where pupils can sit and reflect. There are very good relationships at all levels which very effectively contribute to the pupils' enjoyment of life at school. The school council provides pupils with a valuable additional 'voice', which they use most effectively for improving the school. The prefect system enables pupils to develop a very wide range of responsibilities. The pupils make an excellent contribution to the local community through, for example, raising funds for charity. The school promotes healthy and safe lifestyles amongst pupils extremely successfully.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good, hence pupils make good progress. Teachers work hard to make the environment stimulating, creating colourful displays throughout the school. Teachers encourage pupils to talk about their learning. For example, some young children explained with enthusiasm how they had planted spring bulbs and what was likely to happen to them in the spring. Teachers make good use of recently installed whiteboards to enhance and deepen learning and build pupils' and their own confidence in the use of information and communication technology (ICT). Teaching assistants work well with lower ability groups and pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and they make good progress. Pupils' progress is regularly assessed and information is used well by most teachers. Teachers do not benefit from sharing the best practice that exists in the school in aspects of teaching.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has a positive influence on pupils' learning and personal development. There is a wide variety of interesting and engaging activities that ensure young children experience all that they should. Although a modern foreign language is not part of lessons, all pupils have access to French clubs. As a result, older pupils are keen to take part in a residential visit to France. The school seeks constantly to improve the curriculum. For example, this term teachers have focused on the need to include more lessons about other cultures and faiths to deepen pupils' understanding of the wider community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Procedures for child protection are robust and relevant staff and governors receive appropriate training. The clean and well maintained accommodation, as well as regular assessments of physical risk, promote pupils' safety effectively. Older pupils support younger ones through the well established 'buddy' system. In discussions pupils confirmed that, 'You can always ask your teacher if you need any help'. Many parents wrote complimentary remarks in the questionnaire showing their appreciation for the quality of the support, care and guidance their children have received from the school over the years. External agencies provide effective additional support for pupils where needed. Through visits to local nurseries and children's homes, there are good opportunities for new children and parents to become familiar with staff at the school. Pupils have too few opportunities to evaluate for themselves how well they are doing with their work in lessons.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides strong leadership. She has a clear vision and gives firm direction for the school. As a result, pupils reach outstanding standards in their work and personal development. There is a very strong focus on raising achievement and expectations. The restructuring of the school's senior management team has contributed to improvements. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. However, the roles and responsibilities of the subject leaders are not fully embedded and therefore lack consistency. Staff and governors share the school's commitment to do the very best for all its pupils.

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
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------

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
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

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

20 October 2006

Dear Pupils

St. John's Roman Catholic Primary School, Berry Lane, Mill End, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, WD3 7HG

Thank you for making us feel so welcome in your school and for being so friendly and helpful. We particularly want to thank the members of the School Council who gave up their lunchtimes to talk to us. I particularly enjoyed visiting your prayer garden where some of you go to reflect.

These are some of the good things about your school

- You are extremely polite and helpful.
- I can see why you enjoy coming to school so much. You like your teachers and you like being with your friends.
- You get on very well with each other and the adults who look after you.
- Everyone works hard to make sure that you are safe.
- You are extremely enthusiastic learners, work hard and behave extremely well.
- Older pupils support the younger ones through the buddy system really well.
- Every year you make good progress because the teaching is good and you are extremely well prepared in advance for what lies ahead.
- The school council works hard and represents your views clearly.

This is what we have asked your headteacher and staff to do to make the school even better

- Share the best practice in teaching and learning between teachers;
- give you more opportunities to work out for yourselves how well you are doing;
- help you improve your handwriting;
- make sure that all the teachers who are subject leaders do an even better job.

Like you, I think that you have lots of opportunities to do exciting things in your lessons and after school. Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Rashida Sharif Her Majesty's Inspector