



St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 119638
LEA Lancashire
Inspection number 280621
Inspection dates 20 June 2006 to 21 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Gillian Salter-Smith

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Buller Avenue
School category	Voluntary aided		Penwortham
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Preston, Lancashire PR1 9QQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01772 742351
Number on roll	173	Fax number	01772 750351
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Father Austin Griffin
Date of previous inspection	1 December 2000	Headteacher	Mr John Welch

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 20 June 2006 - 21 June 2006	Inspection number 280621
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than average and the number on roll is falling because of a declining population in the local area. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with a very small number who come from minority ethnic backgrounds. All pupils speak English as their home language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average and currently there are five pupils with a statement of special educational need. The social and economic circumstances of the areas in which pupils live are broadly average and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Pupils start school in Reception with average levels of development.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Mary Magdalen's is a good school. This view is fully supported by parents and matches the school's own evaluation. Pupils are happy and secure in a supportive and challenging Christian environment where relationships between adults and pupils are excellent. Pupils reach above average standards and their achievement is good because they are well taught and keen to learn. Behaviour is very good and pupils enjoy school. They benefit from an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities. They learn to care for one another and others within and beyond their own community and the school has received awards for excellence in this work. Pupils develop into responsible young people and an outstanding partnership with the local secondary school helps Year 6 pupils to be thoroughly prepared for their next school.

The headteacher, senior and subject leaders are highly committed to maintaining the strong Catholic mission that underpins the work of the whole school. The school's capacity to improve is good because leaders have an accurate view of the school's work and identify the right priorities for improvement. Staff work well as a team and are strongly focused on raising standards. The school is aware of the need to improve its use of assessment information to make lessons even more challenging, and to ensure that all pupils fully understand how well they are doing and what to do to improve. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Since the last inspection there have been some improvements to the outdoor play area for Reception pupils but the limited space and under-developed outdoor area still place a restriction on the quality of learning. Finances are carefully managed and value for money is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make more consistent use of assessment information to ensure that all lesson activities challenge and interest pupils of different capabilities, including the most able.
- Extend the best practice in marking to make sure that all pupils know how well they have done and how they can improve.
- Make better use of the outdoor space in the Foundation Stage to provide good quality learning activities in all areas of the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average. Pupils make good progress throughout the school because they are well taught and keen to succeed. From a broadly average start in Reception pupils progress well and exceed the level expected for their age. Results of national assessments in writing, reading and mathematics for Year 2 pupils have been significantly above average in four of the past five years.

Overall, results in the Year 6 national tests for English, mathematics and science were significantly above average in 2005 and in three of the past five years. Following a dip

in 2003, the trend is now upwards at a faster rate than the national one. In 2005 more pupils gained the higher levels in mathematics and science than in English. The school responded to this and has continued its successful work on raising standards in writing across the school. In 2005, the school's targets, which were based on nationally expected rates of progress, were exceeded. The school's information on achievement in Year 6 suggests that pupils are on target to reach the levels expected of them, continuing the improving trend. Boys and girls achieve similar standards. The good achievement of pupils from minority ethnic groups and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Relationships are excellent and the school is a happy and friendly Christian community in which pupils thrive and do well. Pupils work hard in lessons and their enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attendance. Time is set aside each day for pupils to pause and think about their own circumstances and how they can support others, helping to develop their genuine concern for each other. Teachers and pupils agree on what should go into their class charters on conduct. This leads to very good behaviour, because pupils have a clear understanding of what is acceptable and how their actions can affect others. Pupils celebrate their own culture through their appreciation of art and, for example, learning local customs such as clog dancing. They enjoy special weeks when learning across the school is based on a theme, such as a different culture and its traditions. These experiences help pupils to develop a good understanding and respect for faiths and cultures other than their own. Pupils have an excellent understanding about keeping safe and healthy. They know, for example, how to look after their teeth and many take part in physical activity regularly. Pupils appreciate that they can make a good contribution to the community by raising funds and taking care of the environment. Year 6 pupils are very well prepared for their future and leave school as confident young adults.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers' high level of care and support for every pupil is evident in all classrooms. High expectations of behaviour and a good humoured atmosphere help pupils to become confident learners. Lessons are well structured and teachers are skilled in explaining work and taking pupils through gradual steps that make learning manageable. Pupils enjoy lessons where they do practical work, find things out for themselves and feel challenged. However, in some lessons the most able pupils are not always fully challenged and they find the work too easy. This is because teachers do not always make the best use of what they know about those pupils' prior attainment to provide challenging and varied activities. Nor do they

identify the difference between what most pupils will learn and what more is expected of the most able. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. The most helpful marking is in literacy in Key Stage 2 where both teachers and pupils identify how pupils have succeeded against clear criteria and they state what needs to be done next. Other marking is weaker because it does not give enough information to pupils on how well they have done and what needs to be improved.

Teachers and teaching assistants use detailed individual educational plans to provide well targeted support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage and the focus is firmly on learning through practical activity. In some activities pupils do not have enough opportunity to find things out for themselves.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and meets pupils' needs well. Careful planning ensures a good balance between academic, creative and physical activities. Literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills are promoted well across the school. The very good attention given to pupils' personal, social and health education makes a major contribution to their personal development. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported well and are fully included in all activities. Since the last inspection, the school has improved access to the outdoors for children in the Foundation Stage and children enjoy using the additional resources for physical development at break times. However, the limited and under-developed space available does not encourage staff to extend learning in all aspects of the curriculum to the outdoors. Document reference number: HMI 2507 03 October 2005 Document reference number: HMI 2507 03 October 2005. Pupils enjoy and benefit from an outstanding variety of extra-curricular activities that includes sport, music, computers and many other activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils feel safe and know staff are available when they are needed. Regular checks are made to keep the school safe. Risk assessment of all out-of-school activities is carried out. Child protection procedures are understood by all staff. Very close links with external agencies keep staff well informed on how best to support more vulnerable pupils. Arrangements to support the move to the secondary school for Year 6 pupils are outstanding. They include many useful visits to the secondary school, learning activities that carry over from Year 6 to Year 7 and close tracking of progress as pupils move on. Pupils are taught about dangers they might face, for example from smoking or other hazards to health and what to do to avoid them. The school is currently working with other schools to improve resources for education about sex and relationships.

Pupils' progress is checked carefully and underachievement is identified quickly and dealt with. Pupils find their individual targets helpful when they understand what they mean and they are referred to and checked by pupils and teachers frequently. They

are less helpful when pupils do not fully understand them and staff do not bring them to pupils' attention often enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher gives a strong and clear lead to the work of the school and ensures that the school's Catholic mission pervades all its work. Leaders and staff work well as a team to put the mission statement into practice. As a result pupils are taught well, cared for and supported so that they are happy in school and achieve well in many different ways. The school is fully committed to improvement and raising standards. Leaders know what is done well and what needs to be improved because they analyse pupils' achievement closely, carry out regular checks on the quality of learning and teaching, and seek the views of parents, staff and pupils regularly. Consequently, the school identifies the correct priorities, takes suitable action, provides well focused professional development, and is successful in raising standards. For example, the quality of writing has been a focus and is improving; a particular group of pupils who needed extra help has been supported effectively and is making good progress. Subject leaders are increasing their role in the process of improvement and becoming more accountable for pupils' achievement and the quality of learning and teaching. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Their views are sought and acted upon. They now receive more frequent reports from teachers on their children's progress. Governors are well informed of the school's work and key governors are actively involved in school. They are working hard to develop their role, particularly in encouraging families in the area to send their children to the school. A large financial surplus was carefully planned to support the re-organisation of classes during a period of falling rolls. It has been considerably reduced and the budget is now suitably balanced. The school provides good value for money.

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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	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	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?	2	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	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	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

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To the pupils of:

St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School

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Penwortham

Preston

Lancashire

PR1 9QQ

20 June 2006

Dear pupils

Thank you for making us feel so welcome in your school. We enjoyed meeting and talking to many of you. We saw you in lessons and looked carefully at your work. The purpose of our visit was to find out how your school helps you to learn and to grow up. It is important that you understand what we found out.

You have a good school that helps you to achieve well in your work. You are well taught and your teachers and all the staff in the school take very good care of you. The school has a strong Catholic mission and the headteacher and all the staff and governors are keen for you to benefit from this. You do so by becoming very caring and mature young people who are sensitive to other people's needs. You do a great deal to help others within and beyond your school. The school gives you an excellent choice of extra activities so that many of you achieve especially well in sport and music. Your school works very well with the local secondary school to make sure that you are well prepared for your next school.

You told us that you enjoy lessons when you feel challenged, find things out for yourselves and do practical work. We have asked the school to include more of these activities in lessons that interest and challenge everyone. We know that you find the way teachers mark your work in literacy helpful. We have asked the school to mark more of your work in this way so that you know how well you have done and what you need to do to improve. We can see how the school has improved the outdoor play area for the youngest children. We have asked the school to improve it even more so that the children can spend more time learning about all sorts of different things whilst they are outdoors.

You can help by continuing to enjoy your school and working hard. I wish you good luck and good fortune for your futures.

Yours sincerely

Gillian Salter-Smith (Mrs)