



St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Langho

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119642
LEA Lancashire
Inspection number 280623
Inspection dates 26 January 2006 to 27 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Shirley Herring

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Whalley Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Langho
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Blackburn, Lancashire
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01254 247157
Number on roll	249	Fax number	01254 247283
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Phil Hartley
Date of previous inspection	1 July 2000	Headteacher	Miss Felicity Watson

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School is a popular school serving an affluent area in the Lancashire village of Langho. The school is a key facility in the parish and has strong links with the church and wider network of Catholic schools. The school is of average size, though the recent building work has provided accommodation for an increasing number of pupils. This has necessitated the introduction of mixed ages in some infant classes. Children enter school with above average skills overall and the number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average. The school was withdrawn from serious weaknesses in 2001 and received a School Improvement Award in 2002 and a Basic Skills Award in 2003.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspection team agrees with the school that St Mary's is a good school, where pupils' personal development and the level of care they receive are outstanding. The key factor in the success of the school, and the considerable improvement since the last inspection, is the outstanding vision, energy and drive of the headteacher. She is ably supported by a good deputy and an influential governing body. The role of the coordinators has improved considerably since the last inspection. However, they are not yet always fully aware of standards achieved and progress made in their subjects. Standards are good in Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils achieve well overall. Improvement stalled in 2005, with the results of the national tests in Year 6 showing broadly average standards. The current Year 6 shows achievement and standards are again above average overall, with some pupils attaining highly. Teaching and learning are good. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of pupils well.

The excellent links with the local high school support the curriculum and the pastoral care of pupils. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good, which is a great improvement on the unsatisfactory provision identified in the last inspection. Improvements in standards in Key Stage 1, in the provision in the Foundation Stage, the curriculum and in information and communication technology (ICT) indicate a strong capacity to improve further. The school gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the role of the coordinators in monitoring achievement and standards in their subject and defining ways to improve.
- Increase the pace of lessons judged to be adequate rather than good so that pupils learn at an even quicker rate, particularly in writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good overall. Children enter the school with levels of attainment that are above average overall. They make good progress in Reception so that the vast majority achieve or exceed the recommended goals in all areas of learning by the time they enter Year 1. This progress is maintained and standards in Year 2 are now above average overall, representing a considerable improvement over the unsatisfactory standards at the last inspection. Standards are good overall in Year 6. Whilst improvement stalled in 2005, with the results of the national tests in Year 6 showing broadly average standards overall, school records illustrate that this was due, in part, to exceptional issues causing disruption to the learning of individual pupils. Observations of the current Year 6 show achievement and standards are again above average overall, with some pupils attaining particularly highly. Pupils are on line to reach the challenging targets set. Whilst standards in writing are above average, fewer pupils achieve the higher level in writing than in other subjects, in both Year 2 and

Year 6. A factor is that the examples of outstanding teaching were in science and mathematics rather than in English.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because of the good level of support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development is outstanding. Children's enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attendance, very positive attitudes and good behaviour. They feel safe and secure and have a good understanding of how to follow a healthy lifestyle. Exceptional spiritual, moral, social and cultural development stems from the school's very strong Roman Catholic ethos. The school has excellent links with the local parish and with the wider community such as the Blackburn Council of Mosques, which prepare pupils well for life in a culturally diverse society. Pupils regularly help those less fortunate than themselves through fundraising, and contribute to the community through involvement in local projects such as the Ribble Valley Recycling scheme. During special assemblies and on occasions when each class is gathered together they make recommendations about issues, such as uniform and playground equipment, which help to improve their lives in school. Relationships are very good. All are valued and respected so that pupils develop confidence and high self esteem. In the excellent preparation for their future economic well-being they develop very secure skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT and extensive experience and understanding of how to work together.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall. Some outstanding teaching was observed in Years 2 and 6, science and mathematics. The best lessons are lively, challenging and conducted at a brisk pace so that pupils are interested, work hard and learn at a rapid rate. In an outstanding Year 6 science lesson, the teacher's high expectations and his very good subject knowledge enabled pupils to make rapid progress in their skills in planning and organising fair tests when investigating air resistance and gravity. However, in some lessons where the pace is less brisk, pupils are not sufficiently challenged so the rate of learning is slower. Teachers make good use of assessments to plan work that matches the needs of different groups, to track children's progress and set targets for improvement. In the thorough marking of work and in discussions with children, teachers provide useful advice on how they might improve. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported when they work in class or are withdrawn in small groups and make good progress. Teachers and teaching assistants know the children very well and work very closely together to ensure continuity of learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum is broad, balanced and well planned. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who learn at a quicker rate, have equal access to the curriculum. Opportunities for enrichment are outstanding. Learning is extended by the very wide range of visits out of school, including religious retreats and residential visits to outdoor centres. In a similar way, professional visitors to school help to promote enjoyment and enthusiasm. The wide range of extra curricular activities, including sport and music, enrich the curriculum further. The school makes good provision for pupils to use and develop their numeracy, literacy and ICT skills in the other subjects of the curriculum.

The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good. It is firmly based on suitably practical activities in all areas of learning. This is an exceptional improvement since the last inspection where the curriculum throughout the school was judged to be unsatisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall. The school takes excellent care of its pupils and ensures that the welfare of each pupil is paramount. Adults know pupils and their families very well and provide a very supportive and caring community within the school and the parish. Child protection and health and safety procedures are fully in place and the school is very warm and welcoming. Pupils are confident that they would turn to an adult should they have worries. The school makes good use of its assessments in order to identify areas for improvement for the school as a whole and for individuals. Progress is carefully tracked and pupils are given overall targets for improvement. These broad targets provide a useful measure for improvement over time. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and they achieve well. Their needs are identified at an early stage and their individual education plans indicate clear manageable targets for improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall and the inspirational leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. Her commitment, energy and exuberance set the tone for the happy and hard working ethos in school with staff working very collaboratively to raise standards. This exceptional teamwork provides a very good example for pupils to follow in their own personal development. The headteacher is ably supported and complemented by a good deputy in improving standards.

Whilst the school judges leadership and management to be outstanding overall, the curriculum coordinators are not yet always fully aware of standards achieved and progress made in their subjects. In its thorough self-evaluation, the school has rightly identified writing as an area of development and standards are now rising. However,

the current lack of a literacy coordinator is an impediment to managing improvement at an even faster rate.

The strong governing body provide good support and challenge for the school. They show a good awareness of its needs and make a valuable contribution in implementing any necessary change. The school seeks parents' views regularly through questionnaires.

The good improvements since the last inspection in standards in Key Stage 1, in provision in the Foundation Stage, in the curriculum and in ICT indicate a strong capacity to improve further. The school gives 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	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	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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St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Langho

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27 January 2006

Dear Children

Thank you for making Mr Earley and myself feel so welcome when we visited you in school recently. We immediately felt we were in a very happy place. We were impressed with your good manners, behaviour and hard work. We know you enjoy school because you told us so and your very neat books show you take a real pride in what you do. Mr Earley enjoyed the assembly on Friday morning, particularly your singing and your animal noises, and I am sure you feel really proud when you receive an award.

We think that Miss Watson is a very good headteacher. Your teachers take very good care of you and spend a lot of time marking your books to help you to learn. We know that you have all been trying hard to improve your writing and we want you to keep it up. You work together sensibly and learn well. To help you even further we have asked your teachers to make sure that you can get on with your work as quickly as possible so that you can all do your best.

Yours faithfully

Mrs S Herring

Lead Inspector