



St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Haslingden

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119663
LEA Lancashire
Inspection number 280627
Inspection dates 8 June 2006 to 9 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Jennie Platt

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Lime Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Haslingden
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Rosendale, Lancashire
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01706 214747
Number on roll	81	Fax number	01706 229064
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Cathy Pilling
Date of previous inspection	1 October 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Susan Lawson

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 8 June 2006 - 9 June 2006	Inspection number 280627
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized school situated in an area of socio-economic disadvantage. The vast majority of pupils are White British. No pupil has English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, including the proportion with a statement of special educational need. An average number of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Attainment on admission is below average. The school has had a turbulent time over the last few years. There have been many changes of staff as the school has faced a threat of closure. The school has had five acting headteachers since the last inspection. Currently, the majority of staff are temporary and very new to the school. In February 2006, it was agreed the school would stay open and new staff, including a headteacher, have recently been appointed to take up posts at the start of the new academic year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides an acceptable quality of education with some good features. This agrees with the school's own evaluation of its work. Despite the many changes in staff this is a happy school because personal development is strong. Pupils enjoy school and consequently attendance is good. Standards vary between years because of the small size of the cohorts. Currently, achievement is satisfactory and pupils leave school with broadly average standards, except in writing which is below average. Although the overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, the lack of a consistent approach to teaching writing means pupils have failed to acquire accuracy in basic literacy skills. Assessment systems are now established but teachers do not always use assessment when setting challenging work for the more able pupils who could make better progress. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and children make good progress and reach the level expected for their age. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall with strong leadership from the acting headteacher who has restored confidence and stability in the school. The change in headteachers and lack of subject coordinators means monitoring systems are not sufficiently developed to check that changes are having the desired effect on standards. This has slowed down the improvement since the last inspection. This is especially notable in information and communication technology (ICT) which lacks sufficient resources to fulfil all the expected requirements. However, with the threat of closure removed and the appointment of permanent staff for next term, the school shows satisfactory capacity to improve. Value for money is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement a consistent approach to teaching all aspects of writing and so raise standards.
- Ensure assessment information is used effectively to target and challenge all pupils, especially the more able.
- Develop monitoring procedures so that managers at all levels have a thorough understanding of achievement and standards and are able to evaluate the effect of changes on standards.
- Increase resources for ICT.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. From a below average starting point, children in the Foundation Stage make good progress and reach the level expected for their age. In literacy and numeracy, children benefit from working with older pupils and confidence grows in writing and handling numbers.

Results of national tests in Years 2 and 6 vary from year to year because of the size of the cohort. Generally, results have been average or above in both key stages. Current standards in Year 2 are average in reading and mathematics but below average in

writing. Writing is also a weakness in Key Stage 2 and standards have declined because of staffing changes and inconsistent approaches to teaching basic writing skills. New approaches have been implemented but, as staff leave, the impact of these initiatives has been lost. This is very evident in Year 6 where pupils' work shows lack of accuracy in spelling, punctuation and a weak style of handwriting. Teaching of science and mathematics in Year 6 has been more effective in filling gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills, and standards in these subjects are average. In Years 2 and 6, few pupils exceed the level expected for their age. This is because not all teachers make the best use of assessment to identify and plan for those pupils who could make better progress. ICT progress is satisfactory except in aspects of control where the school lacks resources.

The school is well placed to meet its current targets which are sufficiently challenging recognising that the present Year 6 includes three pupils with statements of special educational need. These pupils have made satisfactory progress overall and better progress in their social skills. These have developed well because of the warm relationships with their support staff who offer effective help in lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development is good. The happy atmosphere which pervades the school was at the heart of parents' determination to keep the school open. Behaviour is good and in assemblies is excellent when pupils listen attentively. They confidently share their ideas knowing that their peers respect them. Relationships are very good. As one pupil said, 'love is us'. Pupils enjoy school as can be seen in the above average attendance. Pupils know how to stay safe and keep healthy. They make good use of the outdoor equipment and sporting clubs to keep fit. Most pupils work hard but not enough attention is given to presentation, and handwriting especially could be much better.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils develop a real sense of spirituality during acts of worship through singing and prayers. Pupils reflect on how they can help others and this promotes their good contribution to the community. They appreciate that others have a different faith and the school is extending their understanding well of life in a multi-cultural society with visits and visitors.

Pupils are soundly prepared for their future. They leave school as confident pupils ready to move on but some lack a secure foundation in literacy skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Current staff have made a concerted effort to generate a calm and purposeful atmosphere and provide activities that sustain pupils' enthusiasm for learning. In this, they have been most successful. For example, good use is made of the interactive whiteboard and this captures pupils' interest. First hand

practical activities and infinite patience are strengths in the good teaching in the Foundation Stage. Mathematics is taught especially well in Year 6 and the teachers' high expectations have greatly improved pupils' confidence in mental calculation. Some of the weaknesses in pupils' writing can be traced back to an inconsistent approach to teaching the skills. This has left weaknesses in writing in Year 6 which cannot improve with a quick fix. Pupils' work shows current expectations are not always high enough, especially for the more able pupils. A key feature in lessons throughout the school is the positive relationships. Pupils learn in an orderly atmosphere. Careful planning lays down what is to be taught and gives structure to lessons. When teaching is less effective, too much attention is given to completing a task rather than concentrating on pupils' learning. Marking is thorough but few comments tell pupils how to improve. Remarks tend to be too positive leading pupils to think their work is better than it is.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is carefully planned to match the different age groups in each class. A restriction on spending has hampered the necessary spending on ICT resources and pupils do not experience all the required elements of the curriculum. Personal, social and health education is threaded effectively through all aspects of the curriculum. This is pivotal to the school's strength in personal development. Recent enrichment of the Foundation Stage curriculum has put the emphasis firmly on first hand experiences, learning being fun and children making good progress. Careful planning and use of staff is overcoming the difficulties of access to the outdoor area and plans are in place to make this area more secure. A good range of extra-curricular activities and visits enrich the curriculum. During the inspection, the arrival of a fleet of motor bikes as part of a road safety talk created a great buzz of excitement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support for pupils are satisfactory with some good features. Good attention is given to pupils' safety. The required checks are conducted to sustain a safe environment. Child protection procedures are well established. Good links with external agencies are especially helpful in supporting the more vulnerable pupils. The school's Christian ethos forms a strong basis for personal development. Parents and pupils value the support and strong partnership they have with the school. Pupils describe the school as 'comfy', and feel secure because they know staff are caring and will respond to concerns they put in the class 'worry box'.

Procedures to track the progress pupils make are satisfactory. A start has been made to involve pupils in their learning by setting them targets which are on display. These do not fully take into account the wide range of ages and experiences in each class and, in some cases, pupils are unclear about what they need to do in order to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. Leadership from the acting headteacher is good. In a short space of time, she has enthused staff and brought stability and order to the school. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is strongly promoted. However, the many changes in leadership have led to an inconsistency in implementation of change and this has had an adverse effect on improvements. For example, writing continues to need attention. This explains why leadership and management are satisfactory overall rather than good.

Self-evaluation is accurate. Parents' and pupils' views are sought and acted upon but it is difficult for new staff to be fully involved in this process. Monitoring of what is happening in school has not fully developed as subject leaders and headteachers have constantly changed. As a result, the impact of changes on standards has not been thoroughly investigated.

Governors are very supportive. Parents appreciate their efforts to keep the school open. This has taken considerable time and has taken them away from their role of critical friend. Financial management is satisfactory. A deficit had been allowed to build up but with strict control this has now been reversed. Capacity to improve based on progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. Nevertheless, it is clear a secure base is now in place for the new staff to build upon.

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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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	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	2	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	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	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	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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8 June 2006

Dear Pupils,

Thank you so much for your help when I visited your school. I really enjoyed meeting you all and your discussions have been very helpful to me in writing this report.

I agree with your parents that it is a happy place for you to learn. It has some good features, especially the way you behave and care for each other. You told me you felt safe and it is very clear to visitors that staff are kind and look after you well. I was pleased to see you keeping fit at lunch time as you join with your friends in games. It was a pleasure to meet your school council and I know they take their responsibilities seriously and this allows you all to contribute ideas to the daily life of the school.

I have asked Mrs Lawson and the governors to make sure you all make enough progress, especially in writing, and all of you have hard enough work in all subjects. At the moment, you do not have enough resources for ICT and the governors are going to look at extending these for you. It has been difficult with the many changes of teachers to carefully monitor what is happening in school and this is another aspect the staff are going to improve.

I am very pleased your school is to stay open and wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs J E Platt

Lead Inspector