



St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Darwen

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119667
LEA Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number 280628
Inspection dates 31 January 2006 to 1 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Elizabeth Greensides

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Limes Avenue
School category	Voluntary aided		Darwen
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Lancashire, BB3 2SG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01254 706264
Number on roll	188	Fax number	01254 776 896
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Tom Mclver
Date of previous inspection	1 May 2000	Headteacher	Mr Anthony Pearson

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors

Description of the school

This average sized primary school serves a mixed community of owner-occupied and rented accommodation with pockets of more severe deprivation. The proportion of children entitled to free school meals is below the national average. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average for children of this age. Children enter the Reception class from a number of local nurseries and play groups as the school does not have its own nursery. Almost all children are white British. The proportion of children with learning difficulties is below the national average, and there are few children with statements of special educational needs.

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 which gives satisfactory value for money. The school's own view of its effectiveness is that it is a good school but this is incorrect. Children are looked after well, are safe at school and their personal development is good. Standards are average when the children join the school in Reception and are also average by the time the children leave school. Their overall progress is satisfactory. The standard of education provided in the Reception class is good and these children make good progress. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but is better in the Reception and Infants classes, where it is good, than in the Juniors, where it is satisfactory and could be improved. Because the teachers do not make good enough use of assessment to plan their lessons, the work set is not hard enough for the most able children in the Juniors who do not therefore achieve as well as they should. On the other hand, the less able children, particularly those with learning difficulties, achieve well owing to the good support they receive. Teaching and the planning of the curriculum do not give enough attention to the standards in writing and practical work in science. Leadership and management are satisfactory, but leaders need to develop a more purposeful approach to monitoring teaching and the curriculum to identify what needs to be done to raise standards. The school has made satisfactory improvements since the last inspection and demonstrates that it has the capacity to make the improvements called for in this inspection.

not applicable

What the school should do to improve further

To improve teaching and raise standards the school should:

- use assessment data more effectively to set work for the more able children in the Juniors which matches their ability
- give children more practice in writing in all subjects of the curriculum
- place more emphasis on investigation and practical work in science
- improve the effectiveness of monitoring lessons to show clearly what needs to be done to raise standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The children's achievement is satisfactory overall. From average standards when they begin school, they make satisfactory overall progress and reach average standards by the time they are ready for secondary school. The children make their best progress in the Reception and Infant classes and standards are above average in Year 2. Many children continue to make good progress in the Juniors; in particular, those with learning difficulties make good progress from their low starting points. However, the more able ones are not reaching their full potential because the teachers do not consistently set work at the right level for them. The Year 6 test results, although

average, dipped in 2005. In particular, the English results were lower than in previous years and the science results fell sharply. This is because children are not given enough practice in writing in all subjects of the curriculum, and because they do not have enough opportunity for practical and experimental science. The school is determined to raise standards in the Juniors; it has set demanding targets for 2006 and are on course to achieve them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The children's personal development is good. The school successfully promotes positive attitudes; children are friendly, confident and courteous and generally attentive in class. The children feel safe and secure and say that adults support them well when dealing with occasional instances of bullying. The children behave well and rare occasions of challenging behaviour are managed effectively. Children are keen to learn, and have good attitudes to their work. Most children enjoy school and this has a positive influence on attendance, which is above average. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and is enhanced by the school's Christian ethos. As a result of the school's initiatives, such as provision of healthy snacks and meals, and good opportunities to participate in sport, children learn the benefits of healthy eating and taking regular exercise. They are effectively learning the basic skills they need for the future, particularly in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), although they should practise their writing skills more extensively. The school enables pupils to develop a sense of citizenship and responsibility for others through the school council and a successful business environment project. The school council manages its own budget and has been instrumental in making improvements in outdoor play equipment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good in the Reception and Infants classes but is satisfactory in the Juniors. There are some consistently good features of lessons. The staff expect high standards of behaviour and relationships in classes are good. Classrooms are well organised and teachers make good use of space to create an effective and attractive learning environment. Less able children and those with learning difficulties are well planned for and make good progress, ably supported by the teaching assistants. There are also some weaker features of teaching. Although the school has a system of assessment which enables the children's progress to be tracked, the teachers of the Juniors classes do not make good enough use of it to set work at the right level for the more able children. Consequently, these children do not consistently make the progress that they should. In general, the teachers do not plan enough opportunities for extended writing in subjects other than English, or enough practical and experimental work in science.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school's curriculum is satisfactory. It pays good attention to developing pupils' personal and social skills so that children have a good understanding about living healthy lifestyles and how to develop relationships with each other and with adults. Enrichment activities and theme weeks are a positive addition which are enjoyed by the children. Each individual subject has broad coverage, but the school has not yet evaluated the curriculum as a whole to decide how it could be further improved to meet pupils' needs; for example, to help them to improve their writing skills and those of scientific enquiry. On the other hand, the provision for ICT is good and its use is effective in the different subjects of the curriculum. The Reception children experience a wide range of practical activities, firmly based on giving children first-hand experiences.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Children are well cared for and health and safety procedures are effective. Child protection procedures are rigorous and staff are mindful of the need to be vigilant. The progress of children with learning difficulties and of the small number who learn English as an additional language is reviewed regularly and this helps too adapt teaching specifically to their needs. The school is successful in shaping learners' attitudes to healthy living and their own safety through a number of educational initiatives. Good procedures in the Reception class ensure that children settle quickly when they start school and there is a smooth transition to secondary education. An emerging strength is the very detailed system used to track the progress of individuals and groups of children. However, some teachers do not use the assessment data well enough in their lesson planning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school's leadership and management, and its governance, are all satisfactory. Recent staff appointments have had a positive impact on leadership and management. There are strengths but also some weaknesses which need attention. Good leadership of the Reception and the Infants results in good achievement by the end of Year 2. The headteacher has been instrumental in ensuring good personal development, especially through provision for children's welfare. The governors are supportive, and give freely of their time and work hard. They have a reasonable view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and where it needs to improve. The last few years have seen a significant turnover of staff, and a large building programme, but the potential for disruption has been minimised by leaders, and satisfactory provision has largely been maintained. Leaders involve parents, staff, governors and other stakeholders in the process of evaluating the future needs of the school. New procedures, such as the development of a strong team of support assistants, are already beginning to have a

positive impact on achievement. However, internal systems for checking the quality of the curriculum and teaching are not effective enough. As a result, the school has not, in the past, always had an accurate view of the quality of education provided, for example, of what needs to be improved in the Juniors. The school's leadership now understands the weaker features clearly and is capable of making the necessary improvements.

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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	2	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?	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?	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	3	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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2 February 2006

Dear Children

As you know, we recently visited your school to see how well you are learning. Thank you for your politeness, your good manners and, above all, for your smiles and your helpfulness.

We found some good things.

You do really well in the Reception and Infants.

Your teachers look after you well so that you feel safe.

You like your school; you are well behaved and enjoy lessons.

You are encouraged to take exercise and to live a healthy lifestyle.

There are also some things that could be improved to lead to higher standards in Year 6.

Your teachers should give you more practice at writing in different subjects.

Your teachers also need to give you more practical and experimental work in science.

The teachers need to make sure that the work you do is always hard enough for you so that you do as well as possible.

The headteacher should look at lessons more closely to see how to improve them.

I wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Greensides (Lead Inspector)