



St Matthew's CofE Primary School, Bolton

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105205
Local Authority Bolton
Inspection number 287156
Inspection dates 8–9 November 2006
Reporting inspector Rosemary Rodger

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Kentford Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Bolton
Age range of pupils	3–11		Lancashire BL1 2JL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01204 333005
Number on roll (school)	245	Fax number	01204 333006
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Steven Hanna
		Headteacher	Mrs B Haworth
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	8–9 November 2006	287156

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school located close to a town centre. It serves a very racially mixed area with more than half of the pupils coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. The majority of these are Indian or Pakistani with small numbers of Black and British Asian pupils. There are a number of vulnerable pupils in school including refugees, asylum seekers, looked after children and an above average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A small number of pupils are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. Their main home languages are Gujarati, Panjabi and Urdu. The proportion of pupils having a free school meal is above average and reflects the high levels of disadvantage in the area. The school was recently awarded a re-accreditation of Investors in People.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Matthew's C of E Primary School is a satisfactory school with good features in the quality and standards in the Foundation Stage and good achievement in mathematics by the time pupils leave the school. It provides satisfactory value for money. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall. Parents are generally happy with the contribution the school makes to their children's enjoyment of learning. This is supported by a member of the school council who said, 'I am really, really happy here'. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is hardworking and conscientious, which is well reflected in the thoroughness of the systems to check that all statutory requirements are met and pupils are well cared for and appropriately safeguarded.

Teaching is satisfactory and pupils make at least sound progress by the time they leave school. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well based on their below average attainment on entry to the Nursery. However, this good level of achievement is not sustained in Years 1 and 2, where progress slows. Progress is good in Key Stage 2 because more of the teaching is of a good quality. In 2006, standards in reading and writing were below average in Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, they were below average in English, because of the very low results in writing, and average in mathematics and science.

Personal development and well-being are effectively fostered. Healthy lifestyles are encouraged and pupils understand why this is important. The good attitudes and behaviour of most pupils contributes well to good progress in Key Stage 2.

Arrangements to care, guide and support pupils are effective. The attention to the needs of vulnerable pupils, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning to speak English is given a high priority. As a result, by the time these pupils leave the school they have made good progress. The curriculum is good and appropriately enriched by after school clubs and a range of visits in the local community, to the local mosque, for example.

Self-evaluation involves middle as well as senior leaders and provides an accurate diagnosis of the school's strengths and weaknesses, reflecting monitoring and analysis that are generally of appropriate rigour. Actions to tackle the priorities are stronger in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1, resulting in less progress in Key Stage 1. Some of the well considered actions to improve writing, which is a weakness throughout the school, are not planned to take place until later in the year. Nevertheless, given the accuracy of the self-evaluation and the initial measures to improve writing, the capacity to improve is judged to be good. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve writing standards throughout the school.
- Raise achievement in reading and writing in Key Stage 1, particularly by improving teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards and achievement are satisfactory overall. When children start school in the Nursery, the attainment of many of those who are in the very early stages of learning English is below average. This is because they are not yet fully fluent in speaking or understanding English, although they are fluent in speaking their home language. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage, so by the time they start in Year 1, standards are broadly in line with the national expectations in all areas of learning. This good progress slows in Key Stage 1 because the quality of teaching is inconsistent.

In Key Stage 1, standards in writing have fallen year on year in the past four years. The planned actions to improve writing throughout the school are just beginning to have an impact, especially in Year 1, as a result of improvements in teaching. Achievement in Key Stage 2 is good in mathematics and science as reflected in the results reached in the 2006 national tests. Standards in English improved over two years but fell in 2006 because of weaknesses in writing.

All pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make steady progress and achieve well, as a result of the impact of the effective support by skilled teaching assistants. The large number of pupils of Indian heritage generally achieve well because of their good attitudes and behaviour.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school's Christian aims provide good support for the pupils' spiritual and moral development. They are taught to care for each other. Behaviour in school is good and the pupils enjoy their lessons. The pupils play a part in decision-making through the school council and feel that school leaders take their views into account. They understand the issues around healthy living and about how to keep themselves safe. Physical education and after-school sports coaching mean that pupils keep fit. Fruit is provided for the younger pupils and all are encouraged to drink water frequently during the day. In lessons, opportunities are created for teamwork and partner work and this has a positive impact on learning and enjoyment. Pupils take responsibility for organising equipment at playtimes. Links with a local business partnership have provided good opportunities to work with other schools on a community based project. All of this contributes well to the pupils' economic well-being. Attendance is below average, but the school is doing all it can to improve this through the regular support of the education social worker.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with strengths in the Foundation Stage and teaching in Key Stage 2. The most effective teaching includes precise learning intentions clearly shared with pupils so they know what to do. Innovative teaching methods, such as games in mathematics, are used. Teaching assistants and bilingual support staff make a good contribution to the learning of pupils who speak English as their second language and in supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Information and communications technology (ICT) is used well to enhance pupils' learning. Effective explanations, high expectations and a good level of challenge are consistent in many classes, especially in Key Stage 2. The good attitudes and behaviour of the majority of pupils mean they concentrate and persevere with their work and make good progress. This occurs even when lessons are uninspiring and badly resourced. Pupils are sometimes not involved enough in learning in whole-class sessions and opportunities for teaching to demonstrate, especially how to write, are overlooked.

Assessment procedures are secure. The detailed ongoing records of progress kept for individual pupils year by year are beginning to have an impact on assisting with the identification of underachieving groups and higher attaining pupils. Specific points to improve are now provided for groups of pupils in each class in writing. However, the impact of the use of this information when marking pupils' daily work is inconsistent, so pupils themselves are not always clear about what they need to do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum and lesson planning takes into account the pupils' wide range of ability. The school is currently exploring ways to bring subjects together in topics with the aim of adding improved interest and enjoyment, but this work is at an early stage of development. The Foundation Stage curriculum provides good opportunities for investigation and exploration through practical experience and this enables the younger children to make good progress in learning. In Key Stages 1 and 2, work has recently begun on developing the pupils' thinking skills. This is beginning to have an impact on pupils' understanding. The curriculum is enriched by the use of ICT in lessons and by a good range of after school clubs, many with a sporting or performing arts focus. The programme of visitors to school and visits, including a residential trip to the Eden Project, also enriches learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares well for its pupils. Systems are in place to ensure their personal safety and security on the school site. Safe recruitment of staff and systems to check on adults in school are all in place. Child protection requirements are met and the school works well with external agencies. Vulnerable children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well provided for through small group and individual support and through well planned lessons. The pupils' progress is tracked and measured against milestones across the school year. This gives a good overview and the school uses this information in its planning. In lessons, the pupils are well supported by good teamwork between the teachers and classroom assistants. Support for those pupils who do not have English as their home language enables them to become fluent very rapidly during the Foundation Stage. Parents are pleased with the care the school gives and feel that they are kept well informed about their children's progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory with strengths in the leadership of English, mathematics and the Foundation Stage. The school's self-evaluation judgements have almost accurately mirrored those of the inspection, apart from that of leadership and management which is judged to be satisfactory because the slower progress in Key Stage 1 has not been given a high enough priority. The school improvement plan is streamlined to focus on the school's core purpose to enable pupils to achieve as well as they are capable. Many of the tasks have yet to have a significant impact on improving teaching and learning but the capacity for the school to improve is good, based on what has been introduced and recent improvements to teaching already evident.

Governors are supportive of the headteacher and shoulder several of the administrative duties linked to their role well. The chair is very knowledgeable of the issues facing the school through his involvement in the school's self-evaluation and regular visits. The senior leadership team are being developed well as a result of ongoing training to enhance their management responsibilities. They are guided admirably by the example of the deputy headteacher's pivotal role in modelling good teaching. They are all fully aware of the areas for improvement and work hard. Resources are satisfactory, but ongoing problems with the building have meant that refurbishment of several dated classrooms has been held up.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Thank you for all your help during the recent inspection of your school. We really enjoyed the time we spent talking to you and observing your lessons. This letter is to tell you what we liked most about your school and what we have asked to be improved.

What is good about your school.

- You all enjoy attending school and work hard in lessons.
- You achieve well in mathematics because of the good teaching.
- You are well cared for and kept safe in school.
- The children in the Nursery and the Reception classes have a really good time.

What needs to improve.

- Some of you do not do so well in reading and writing in Year 1 and Year 2.
- All of you need to improve your writing.

You can help by taking every chance you can to write carefully and practising your reading and writing at home.

Thank you again for all your help during the inspection.