

St Ambrose RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105520
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	287246
Inspection date	20 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael Onyon

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr JP Earley
Headteacher	Mr C Flannery
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2002
School address	Princess Road Chorlton-cum-Hardy Manchester M21 7QA
Telephone number	0161 4453299
Fax number	161 4380525

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is smaller than average urban primary school. While the majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds an above average proportion come from minority ethnic groups. A number are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is well above average. The overall percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average with considerable variations in year groups. At the time of the inspection, the school was led by the deputy headteacher in an acting capacity. The school has Healthy School and sport ActiveMark awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that has maintained its strengths since its last inspection, and improved in some areas. The school has been cautious in its own judgement of its overall effectiveness. The inspection confirms the views of the large majority of parents, who find the school to be well led and their children skilfully taught. Pupils are safe and well cared for, and enjoy their time in school, as their improving attendance demonstrates. They show in their understanding and commitment to healthy lifestyles that the school's achievement of the national Healthy School award and ActiveMark are deserved.

Pupils achieve well to reach standards in English, mathematics and science that are broadly average. However, not enough Year 6 pupils reach the higher National Curriculum levels. Early indications are that many of the current Year 6 pupils have reached the levels expected for their age and that the school is on line to reach its challenging targets for 2007. National test results are broadly average at the end of Year 2. Pupils make good progress and achieve well during Key Stages 1 and 2. Changes to staffing in the Foundation Stage have been effective and provision is improving. However, here, children's progress is satisfactory rather than good. They enter the school at levels below those expected for their age and few are on course to reach the early learning goals as they enter Year 1.

Pupils' personal development is good, as is their moral, social and cultural development, with outstanding aspects in their spiritual development. Older pupils are good ambassadors for the school. They show in their mature and sensible approach how effectively the staff support them to develop good personal skills. Behaviour is good in and around school, and pupils' commitment to learning is evident in lessons. They make a positive contribution to the school and local community, and are well prepared for the next stage in their learning. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils say that the best things about the school are the teachers and learning. The staff's lesson planning is detailed and pupils know what they are expected to learn. The curriculum is good and there are well attended after-school clubs and many interesting enrichment activities. Recent improvements to curricular planning, based on establishing links between subjects, is beginning to have a positive impact. The staff's care and guidance for the pupils is good. However, more needs to be done to guide academic development, to ensure that pupils take more responsibility for their learning and progress. Leadership and management are good. The acting headteacher provides effective leadership. She is supported well by the rest of the staff, the governors and most parents. Changes to the structure of the leadership team have empowered other senior leaders. They have taken on increased responsibilities successfully and are strongly committed to further professional development. Self-evaluation is good and the whole school community contributes to the effective school improvement plan. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good and there is a good capacity for future improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in national tests at Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that the guidance offered helps pupils to know what they have to do to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter the school at levels lower than expected and reach average standards at the end of Year 6. Test results fluctuate year on year and reflect the considerable differences in the proportion of pupils in each year identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school does well for such pupils and for those from minority ethnic groups or in the early stages of learning English. The results of assessments in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 are broadly average, mirroring the good progress pupils make during Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, this rate of progress is maintained and most pupils continue to achieve well. However, although test results have improved over the past few years, not enough pupils reach the higher level 5 in Year 6. In the current Year 6 progress and achievement are good and standards average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The majority of pupils respond with enthusiasm to the positive ethos of the school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils enjoy school, feel safe and say they like the way that everybody gets on well together. The strong commitment of the acting headteacher and staff and the good relationships within the school ensure that all pupils, from all ethnic backgrounds, have a voice in the school. School council members and playground 'buddies' fulfil their roles well. They are involved in making decisions, for example to provide better access to water for pupils and more equipment to use at playtimes. Through work to achieve the national Healthy School accreditation all pupils have a good understanding of healthy living. Pupils' sound basic skills and good personal and social skills prepare them well for the next stage in their education and for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning have improved since the previous inspection. The school's ethos ensures that teachers know the pupils well and the tracking of their progress gives teachers good information to plan effective lessons. Pupils are keen to learn and talk positively about their interesting learning activities. Teachers and support staff work closely together, particularly to enable pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make good progress. Teachers ensure that pupils know what they are expected to learn and assess how well they have progressed at the end of lessons. Although guidance is sometimes offered to pupils to help them understand what they need to do next to improve their work, this does not occur consistently. As a result, opportunities are missed to extend learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of visits and visitors. It is enhanced by the effective use the school makes of its immediate environment and the thoughtful use of available space in order to extend learning. This helps pupils to become fully engaged in their work. Personal, social and health education gives pupils a good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles.

There is a focus on the basic skills and these are used well in other subjects so that pupils see a purpose in their learning. A strength in the curriculum is the way in which activities are adjusted to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, ensuring that all pupils make good progress. Pupils are enthusiastic about the good enrichment through a wide variety of clubs and activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The safeguarding of pupils meets national guidelines and systems are in place to ensure the health and safety of pupils. Partnerships with parents and other professionals are good. A strength of this partnership is illustrated in the good links with the partner high school, supporting the transition of older pupils. Procedures for the assessment and tracking of pupils' progress are being developed to ensure that teachers, pupils and parents have a more informed view of academic and personal progress. Pupils know their targets, but they are not always sufficiently aware of what they need to do to attain them. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are monitored and supported well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The acting headteacher provides clear leadership, and in conjunction with the substantive headteacher, has developed and utilised the considerable talents of the staff. Staff have improved how the school tracks the progress that pupils make. Provision in the Foundation Stage has improved and there is a growing sense of confidence and teamwork. Checks on the quality of teaching and learning and on pupils' progress are carried out effectively by the leadership team, with subject leaders becoming increasingly involved in this role. Nevertheless, the school's managers do not yet ensure that consistent guidance is offered to pupils to help them improve. The school has improved the fabric of the school building and information and communication technology equipment. The governing body is fully involved in the work of the school and monitors its performance closely. Governors use their expertise to support the school and to carry out their critical friend role effectively.

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Annex A

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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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	2
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?	2
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for making me so welcome in your school and for your help during the recent inspection. I thought you were well behaved, polite and courteous, and worked hard in your lessons. I enjoyed talking to you and listening to what you had to say about your school. Yours is a good school where all staff work hard to help you to do your best. You told me that you liked your school and enjoy your lessons as well as the clubs, visits and visitors. You are rightly very proud of the way you are able to contribute to decisions through the work of your school council. You know a lot about staying safe and being healthy and have done well to achieve the Healthy School award. You care for each other and take on responsibilities, so helping you to become good citizens as you get older.

We have asked the school to help more children reach the higher levels in national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 and to help you all to understand what you need to do to improve your work. I am sure that you will listen to your teachers' advice and will work hard to ensure that you do as well as you possibly can. It was a pleasure to visit your school. Keep working hard so that you continue to do well.