



St Richard's RC Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105544
Local Authority Manchester
Inspection number 287258
Inspection date 21 November 2006
Reporting inspector Arthur Markham

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Wilpshire Avenue
School category	Voluntary aided		Longsight, Manchester
Age range of pupils	3-11		Lancashire M12 5TL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 2245552
Number on roll (school)	362	Fax number	0161 2486003
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Fr M Dever
		Headteacher	Mr J McHale
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This larger than average sized school serves a deprived inner city area in Manchester. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above that in most schools and many are in the early stages of learning English. The number of pupils claiming free school meals is well above average. A larger than usual proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Many pupils join and leave the school throughout the year, including a small number of pupils from refugee/asylum seeker families.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school has modestly evaluated its performance as good, but the inspection finds it to be an outstanding school in which pupils achieve extremely well. This view is shared by parents who rate the school very highly. Comments such as, 'St Richard's represents an excellent example of schooling', and, 'We think St Richard's is the best school by far for our son to attend', mirror the views of many parents. They appreciate the excellent quality of care and the way in which the staff enable their children to enjoy learning. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. The school has a very warm and supportive atmosphere where pupils really feel valued and secure. Relationships are very good and pupils' like their teachers. Pupils consequently have very positive attitudes to learning and behave extremely well. The strong focus given to pupils' personal, social and health education and citizenship, results in them showing increasing maturity as they go through the school. They carry out a range of responsibilities in a very sensible manner and are particularly pleased at the way their views are taken into account through the work of the school council. They have a very good awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles. Their collections for a range of charities reflect their care and concern for others.

A major factor in the excellent progress made by pupils is the strong leadership and direction given by the headteacher. He ensures that pupils' progress is monitored closely so that any showing signs of underachievement are identified and given support. The staff support him very well and share his determination to further raise standards by providing pupils with rich and stimulating learning. As a result, pupils' achievement is outstanding. Children make an impressive start in the Foundation Stage because very good attention is given to developing their skills through a range of well planned and supported activities. Having entered the school with well below expected skills, most children make rapid progress to reach the standards expected of them nationally by the end of Reception. Throughout the school, pupils respond well to the challenging targets set for them and strive to do well. Teaching is very effective and there are some outstanding features, for example, teachers plan their work with great care to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met. The curriculum is rich, stimulating and enhanced extremely well by visits, which makes learning relevant for pupils. As a result, pupils really enjoy school and attain standards that are significantly above those expected nationally in both Year 2 and Year 6. However, the school is not complacent and continually works hard to further improve standards, particularly at the higher levels. For example, it is aware that although performance in science at Level 4 is above average, it is below average at the higher Level 5 and consequently not as good as in the other subjects.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher, senior management team, subject coordinators and governors all fulfil their roles extremely well. Self-evaluation procedures are rigorous and accurately identify the areas needing development, although the school has underestimated the quality of its provision and its overall effectiveness. The school provides outstanding value for money. There has

been very good improvement since the last inspection and the school has an excellent capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in science to the same high level as those in English and mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Throughout the school pupils' achievement is outstanding because very effective teaching successfully generates an enthusiasm for learning. On entry to the Nursery most children have low level skills, particularly in their social development and language and literacy. They make extremely good progress in the Foundation Stage and most reach the standards expected by the end of Reception, and some exceed them. Throughout Years 1 to 6 great care is taken to ensure that this rate of progress is maintained, so that by the end of Year 6, standards are significantly above average overall, although not as high in science and mathematics as in English. Results in national tests have been at this level for the last five years to 2005. In 2006, pupils' performance dipped slightly, mainly because the group contained a high number of pupils who had only recently entered the school. However, the standards attained by the current pupils are well above those expected. Pupils with learning difficulties and those with English as an additional language make excellent progress because their needs are identified accurately and they are given very good support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. They clearly enjoy school and have very positive attitudes to learning. One parent commented that her son got upset when it was holiday time and couldn't wait to get back to school. Another said that her son was very enthusiastic about school and came home each night telling them all about his day. Relationships are very good and pupils respond by behaving extremely well. They say they feel safe in school and would confidently go to an adult if they had any concerns. As they progress through the school they become mature and confident and take on responsibilities enthusiastically. For example, they enjoy being members of the school council and are pleased that their ideas are listened to and taken seriously. They show care and concern for others in their charity work. Pupils have a very good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Their positive attitudes to learning and good achievements in basic skills prepare them well for the next stage in their schooling. Attendance is satisfactory. The school does all it can to improve attendance and the latest figures indicate some success.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Pupils' outstanding achievement reflects the consistently good and often outstanding quality of teaching and learning in the school. Pupils say they enjoy school and that teachers 'make learning fun'. They like their teachers because 'they are kind, but make them work hard so that they learn well'. Teachers know their pupils very well and take care to ensure that activities are suitably challenging. In the Foundation Stage, children are presented with a very good range of opportunities to develop their skills through well structured play. Throughout the school lessons are well planned and teachers explain activities clearly so that pupils know exactly what they have to do. Teachers mark pupils' work carefully and make good use of constructive comments so that pupils understand how to improve. They monitor pupils' progress closely and this enables them to quickly intervene and give extra support to any seen to be underachieving. The effective use of teaching assistants consequently makes a very positive contribution to pupils' learning in the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The rich range of learning experiences presented to the pupils is a major factor in their outstanding progress. The strong emphasis given to personal, social, and health education and citizenship is reflected in the pupils' outstanding personal development. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good with all areas of learning covered exceptionally well. Throughout the school close attention is given to the basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Learning in other subjects is also developed well and made more relevant and interesting through a wide range of visits to places of interest and visitors to school. These enrich the curriculum extremely well and add greatly to pupils' enjoyment of learning. In relation to the many activities on offer, pupils talked particularly enthusiastically about a recent trip to Poland. An extensive programme of after-school activities makes a strong contribution to pupils' enjoyment and achievement. Pupils' understanding of other cultures is developed well through the study of a range of topics and enhanced greatly by the very wide range of languages spoken in the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are outstanding. Friendly, caring relationships help pupils of all ages to feel secure and happy in school. Pupils say they are confident there is someone they can turn to for support if they are upset. Appropriate arrangements are in place for the safeguarding of pupils and health and safety procedures are rigorous. Well organised induction procedures help them to quickly settle into school and good transition arrangements ensure that they make a

smooth transfer to the next phase of their education. The academic guidance given to pupils is very good. Pupils achieve well because their progress is accurately monitored. Staff help them to understand what they need to do to improve, by setting targets and marking pupils' work carefully. Links with external agencies are very good and enable the staff to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

A major factor in the success of the school is the strong leadership provided by the headteacher and the support he is given by all the staff. He gives a very clear educational direction to the school with a strong focus placed on enabling pupils to achieve very well and attain high standards. He checks pupils' progress rigorously and the information is used to determine how well classes are doing and to pinpoint where there are particular shortcomings. He consequently knows precisely where improvement is needed. This is communicated to the committed and hard working staff, who share his determination to provide a high quality education for all pupils. The resultant strong team approach ensures that the school is continually improving. Governors fulfil their responsibilities extremely well. They are very involved in the life of the school and make a strong contribution to moving the school forward. The school works closely with parents, who are rightly very positive about what the school provides.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

As you know, I recently visited your school to find out how well you are learning. Thank you for being so friendly and talking to me. I very much enjoyed being in your school and listening to what you had to say. I judged that St Richard's RC Primary is providing you with an excellent education. It is a very welcoming place and is always trying to improve so that you really enjoy your learning and do very well. The things that I judged to be particularly strong were:

- the way Mr McHale and the staff work hard to make learning fun so that you enjoy school
- the excellent progress you make and the high standards you reach
- the mature approach you have to your learning
- your very good behaviour in lessons and around the school
- your understanding of the importance of a healthy diet and how to keep fit and healthy
- the way your teachers and other adults take good care of you and make sure that you feel safe and happy.

To make it even better the school now needs to:

- make sure that you achieve as well in science as you do in other subjects.

Thank you for helping me so much with the inspection of your school. I hope that you will continue to work hard in school and help the teachers so that St Richards RC Primary becomes an even better school.