

St Mary's CofE Primary School High Crompton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105711
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	287310
Inspection dates	19–20 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Stephen Wall

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs D Morris
Headteacher	Mr J Gardner
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2002
School address	Rushcroft Road Shaw Oldham Lancashire OL2 7PP
Telephone number	01706 847524
Fax number	01706 840560

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized primary school serves an area with a broadly average social and economic profile. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need, is average.

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 and improving school with outstanding features. At the core of all it does is the welfare of its pupils. The care, guidance and support it provides are outstanding. Pupils are valued and nurtured as individuals. Pupils' personal development is also outstanding. Their behaviour is exemplary and they show high levels of respect for adults and each other. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and value highly the education and care it provides. 'My child really loves coming to school. The ethos is excellent and the pastoral care is outstanding,' is a typical parental comment. The school has made good progress since its last inspection and offers very good value for money.

Achievement is good. From broadly average starting points on entry to Reception, pupils make good and improving progress as they move up through the school. By the end of Year 6, standards are well above average in English and mathematics and reflect particularly good achievement in these subjects. Standards in science are above average and improving, but at a more measured rate. This is because assessment systems, whilst effective overall, are not yet sharp enough to identify clearly the needs of different groups of pupils. Refinements to assessment are being made and are already showing some impact; for example, this year there has been an improvement in the proportion of Year 2 pupils attaining the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.

This is an exceptionally happy school. Smiling faces are everywhere. 'I'm going to miss it so much when I leave,' was a typical pupil statement. Pupils' love of school is evident in their excellent attendance. Underpinning the school's work are its strong Christian values, which ensure pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong and the importance of respecting others. Assemblies are used particularly effectively to promote spiritual reflection. It was genuinely heart warming to see the headteacher conduct a whole-school assembly on the importance of values, with every pupil completely engaged and hanging on his every word. Pupils feel safe in school and do not hesitate to seek the help of an adult, if necessary. Pupils know how important healthy lifestyles are and large numbers take part in the outstanding range of sporting enrichment activities. The pupils relish the opportunities they have to help the school run smoothly, for instance, by becoming playground buddies and monitors. They are very active fund-raisers for charities both locally and abroad. By the time they leave school nearly all pupils are confident and articulate. They are very well prepared for the next steps in their education and their future lives.

Teaching is good and encourages effective learning. Teachers prepare their lessons in detail and make good use of information and communication technology (ICT). Relationships are excellent. Teachers are beginning to make better use of assessment data to involve pupils more in understanding and taking responsibility for their own learning. The overall quality of the curriculum is good, including provision in the Foundation Stage. The quality of enrichment activities, however, is outstanding. Pupils really appreciate all the opportunities they have, from playing a wide range of games to singing in the school choir or playing in the highly regarded school band.

Leadership and management are good and are bringing about significant improvements to standards and achievement. The headteacher is an excellent leader. He inspires loyalty and affection and is highly regarded in the community. A passionate believer in the importance of children's happiness and well-being, over the past three years he has effectively added improving

standards and achievement to his armoury. The headteacher is most ably supported by senior managers and the recently appointed deputy headteacher. The school has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make more effective use of assessment to raise standards and achievement even further, for example, in science, and involve pupils more in their own learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage in response to good teaching and a wide range of stimulating activities. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have improved this year, particularly in the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels. As such, progress during Key Stage 1 has improved and is now good. In 2006, Year 6 pupils' national test results in English and mathematics were well above average, representing outstanding progress in these subjects. All pupils gained the expected national level and a high proportion gained the higher levels. The school exceeded its demanding targets. In science, although results were above average, representing good achievement, pupils did not make as much progress as in mathematics and English. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same good progress as other pupils because teaching is very effective in meeting their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They demonstrate very high levels of respect for adults and each other. They talk about a range of cultures and religions knowledgeably. They particularly value how much they learn from their contacts with pupils at a multi-racial primary school in Oldham town centre. 'What we have learned is that we are all the same underneath,' was one older pupil's succinct summary. Pupils are very conscious of the importance of healthy lifestyles, not just in terms of physical well-being but also healthy attitudes to life in general. 'We have loads of opportunities for all sorts of things. I love singing in the choir and playing in the school band. I think these things make me a more interesting person,' was one pupil's considered opinion. The active school council gives pupils a role in developing the school and 'making it a better place to be and to work in'. For example, it has been instrumental in improving playground facilities and organises many charity fund-raising events.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is never less than good and sometimes outstanding. 'Teachers talk less now than they used to so we have more chance to get on with our learning', was a perceptive pupil comment. It highlights the shift that is taking place to make the quality of learning as important as the quality of teaching. Teachers' use of assessment to accurately match work to pupils' needs and involve them more in their learning is developing well, but is not consistent in all lessons. Teachers are ably supported in their work by skilled teaching assistants who provide very effective support for pupils who find learning more difficult. Relationships are very strong in

all classes. Excellent behaviour means no teaching time is wasted on classroom control. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and their comments are generally helpful in showing pupils what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The taught curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and meets the needs of the learners. ICT is a strength. Pupils use it regularly and confidently to present their work and for independent research across a range of subjects. Enrichment activities are outstanding. Educational visits like the residential to France bring learning to life. Visitors to school such as the 'Viking' also add enjoyment, entertainment and interest. Pupils value highly all the opportunities they have and realise that they are 'lucky' to be able to take part in such a wealth of activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Policies and procedures for safeguarding children are in line with government requirements. Children feel safe in school and trust staff to deal with any problems fairly and effectively. This extends to support staff, such as lunchtime supervisors, who have been trained in expectations regarding school practice. Transition arrangements into the Reception class are highly effective so that the children settle in quickly and with a minimum of stress or upset. Very good liaison with local secondary schools also ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. Improvements to assessment procedures are starting to involve pupils more effectively in their learning and identify more sharply the needs of different groups of learners. Support and guidance for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very good. When need is identified, extremely effective use is made of external agencies for specialist help. Pupils comment enthusiastically about how well the school cares for them. 'Our teachers are always there to help us. They always have time for us whatever the problem.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's outstanding leadership promotes very good teamwork, which is focused on raising standards and achievement. Astute appointments have been made to the teaching staff and these are supporting the school's improvement by bringing new experience and helping the school identify what is going to make a difference. For example, the recent review and development of assessment procedures is helping teachers raise expectations and focus on the quality of pupils' learning. Procedures for evaluating the school's effectiveness are thorough and generally accurate, if occasionally somewhat modest. They take into account the views of a wide range of stakeholders including those of the pupils and parents. The quality of middle management is good. Subject managers are becoming increasingly responsible for raising standards in their own areas of responsibility. Governors carry out their responsibilities very conscientiously. They are very effective in providing support and not afraid to challenge when the interests of the pupils are at stake.

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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?	1
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
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?	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?	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.

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	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of St Mary's CofE Primary School High Crompton, Oldham,

OL2 7PP

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. We really enjoyed our two days in your school and having the opportunity of talking to many of you. What you told us helped us greatly in reaching our judgements.

We think you go to a good school which is getting better and better. It has several outstanding features. We were hugely impressed with how well you behave and how much you enjoy being in school. We found you very polite and very welcoming - well done! The school takes excellent care of you and really does value each and every one of you. Your teachers make sure you get good and interesting lessons, with especially good opportunities for you to use ICT. We were pleased to hear that you feel your teachers are expecting you to learn more for yourselves. Standards are improving significantly, especially in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. This is because you are working hard and your teachers are starting to make better use of information on your progress and how best to help you in your learning. We are asking your teachers to make sure that they develop this further as it will help you do even better in future. Your headteacher and all the other adults in the school all think very highly of you and are proud of you. We are confident that you will continue to work hard with your teachers to make sure that your school goes from strength to strength in the future.