

St Edward's RC School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105720
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	287314
Inspection dates	27–28 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Thompson

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	254
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Canon E Dolan
Headteacher	Mr C Saul
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2001
School address	Rowland Way Lees Oldham Lancashire OL4 3LQ
Telephone number	0161 6241377
Fax number	0161 6241377

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average size school serves a wide area that has the full range of social and economic circumstances. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. None is at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average but the proportion with a statement of special educational need is average and covers a wide range of needs.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Children enter the Foundation Stage with skills that are typical for their age. They make good progress as the result of good teaching in a well-managed environment and are well-prepared for their life in the school. Progress continues to be good in Key Stage 1 so that by the end of Year 2 standards are above average. In recent years progress has slowed in Key Stage 2 and results in national tests at the end of Year 6 showed a downward trend. Pupils did not do as well as expected in relation to their standards at the end of Year 2. The school's management identified the causes for this decline and put measures in place to secure improvement. As a result of the school's efforts, results for English, mathematics and science in national tests in 2006 improved and were above average. Nevertheless, although overall achievement for that group of pupils was just satisfactory in relation to their above average standards at the end of Year 2, more than one third of girls did not reach their expected levels. The school's data show that the improvement in standards is being sustained: the majority of pupils in the current Year 6 are on course to meet the school's challenging targets and are achieving satisfactorily.

Pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being are considerable strengths. Pupils flourish in response to the good curriculum and the good quality care, guidance and support they receive. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. In response to the school's values they show respect for themselves, others and the community in which they live. Their behaviour is exemplary and their attitudes are excellent. They enjoy coming to school, as they show by their above average attendance, because it is a bright and lively place where they have lots of interesting things to do.

The school's improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory but not as good as the school believes. Good improvements have been made to the provision of resources, particularly for information and communication technology (ICT). However, achievement is not better than satisfactory because the school's managers were slow to identify the falling off in performance of recent years. The school's leadership knows what needs doing - weaknesses in achievement have been identified - and this is reflected in the school's priorities for improvement. Changes to staffing and class organisation have been effective and there has been a turnaround but it is too soon to see a full impact on achievement. Specialist expertise is being used to advantage in providing curriculum leadership, for example in literacy, but the use of the wealth of available data to support planning of lessons and to promote progress is not yet fully developed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and achievement in Key Stage 2.
- Improve the use of data to inform planning of lessons across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. At some stage as they move through the school all pupils make some good progress. However, there is variation between different year groups that reflects the extent to which pupils are stretched by the work they are given. Higher attainers do not consistently make the progress of which they are capable. Pupils with learning difficulties

and/or disabilities do well because of the support that they receive both in classes and individually.

When children start in Foundation Stage their skills are broadly typical for their age. They make good progress, so that by the end of Year 2 their standards are above average. Progress in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory and standards remain above average in English, mathematics and science. Standards in other subjects are above average. In art and ICT pupils reach high standards across the school because of the variety of challenges presented by these subjects and the opportunities for independent development that pupils are given through them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school is a bright, lively and harmonious place. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the school's values to become as parents say, 'happy, confident, responsible and well motivated'.

Pupils are well prepared for the future. They have good literacy, numeracy and ICT skills together with economic awareness developed through such opportunities as managing the finances of breaktime fruit sales. Pupils show initiative because their ideas are taken seriously and supported by the school. They are encouraged to express their views and concerns through posters, assemblies and work in personal relationship lessons. Pupils say that they feel safe in school: they are confident that any problems will be resolved quickly and effectively. Pupils really enjoy school as shown by their very good attendance. They show responsibility through the school council and the Eco Club, taking part in improving the school's environment.

Pupils show awareness of the needs of others through their charity fundraising and a strong sense of community. For example, they work with senior residents from the community - the 'Silver Surfers' - who come into school to develop their ICT skills. Pupils are safety conscious and understand the principles of living healthily through diet and exercise.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory: some good and outstanding teaching was seen during the inspection. Differences in pupils' progress are the result of variations in the way teaching is planned to challenge pupils of all levels of ability. The consistently good aspects of teaching are teachers' good subject knowledge and the enthusiasm they share with pupils to capture their interest. Relationships in the school are very good and underpin good classroom management so that little time is wasted. However, in some lessons teachers spend too much time on whole class activities. Explanations at the start of these lessons go on for too long, which slows the pace of learning. In these lessons opportunities are missed to develop pupils' independent learning and higher attainers do not make the progress of which they are capable. Marking is inconsistent: at its best it provides clear guidance for pupils on how to improve their work but this is not always the case. When guidance is given, it is not always clear that pupils have followed it or that teachers have checked to see that they have done so.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum contributes very well to pupils' personal development. A very strong component of this is the high quality 'In the Beginning' scheme (a sex education and relationships programme) written and marketed by the school. Provision for the development of basic skills is good so that standards of literacy, numeracy and ICT are above average. Multicultural strands of the curriculum, such as links with a parish in Peru, prepare pupils well for life in a diverse society. Good enrichment of the curriculum includes a wide range of visits and visitors such as poets, theatre and dance groups. The high quality art work displayed around school is the result of good opportunities for reflection and expression. Parents find regular updates on the curriculum very helpful. They enable them to work in partnership with the school to support their children's learning. The curriculum provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well planned to match their needs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Appropriate checks are in place to make sure the school is a safe and healthy environment. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are in place. All pupils are well integrated to the life of the school. Well trained staff and good links with support organisations mean that vulnerable pupils are identified early and make good progress because of the skilful, sensitive, targeted support provided for them.

Parents say they have confidence in the school and that their children are well cared for. Pupils are well informed of their targets but individual guidance on how to improve their work is inconsistent so that they are not always clear as to how they can do better.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school's leadership successfully places emphasis on providing an environment where all pupils are valued and where, as parents say, 'well-rounded individuals with good attitudes' are developed. However, the same emphasis has not consistently been placed on maintaining good achievement, which over the past few years has been just satisfactory. Managers did not pick up the cumulative impact of class reorganisations, made necessary by staffing changes and long term absences, on pupils' performance early enough to take remedial action. This was because the tracking of pupils' progress was not sharply enough focused, which in turn led to an overgenerous view of the school's effectiveness.

The school's leadership is good at managing its resources and has secured good improvement, for example, in computer equipment to support teaching and learning. Good financial management is shown in using income from sales of the school's relationships programme to provide additional support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has also used its budget effectively to provide extra staffing which is beginning to pay off in improved performance through the reorganisation of classes.

Governors are active in their support for the school. They are well informed and understand the challenges facing it. Nevertheless, they are not sufficiently involved in the self-evaluation process to be able to hold the school rigorously to account for its performance.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
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	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
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?	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.

Annex A

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	3
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

Inspection of St Edward's Roman Catholic Primary School, Lees, OL4 3LQ

Thank you very much for the way that you welcomed us into your school. Our thanks go particularly to those of you who helped us with our work and talked to us about life in the school. There is a warm and friendly atmosphere in the school. Your excellent attitudes and behaviour help to make it a bright and lively place. It is clear from everything you told us that you enjoy the many interesting things there are for you to do - particularly the visits you go on and the visitors who come to talk to you. We saw lots of smiling faces. You are well cared for in the school and in turn you show care and concern for others. You told us that you feel safe in the school because you get on well together. We noticed how well you work together in lessons.

Overall, we found that your school is doing a satisfactory job. There are some times when everyone makes good progress but others when some of you could do better. We have asked your headteacher and staff to make sure that you do well all the time. To help with this we have suggested that they make full use of the information they have about how well you are doing to make sure that you do as well as you should.

The really good thing about the school is the way it helps you to become confident, responsible people. We wish you well for the future.