



St Gabriel's Roman Catholic Primary School, Rochdale

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 105825
Local Authority Rochdale
Inspection number 287342
Inspection dates 25–26 January 2007
Reporting inspector George Crowther

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Vicarage Road South
School category	Voluntary aided		Castleton, Rochdale
Age range of pupils	5–11		Lancashire OL11 2TN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01706 650280
Number on roll (school)	153	Fax number	01706 356991
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr D Alexander
		Headteacher	Mrs A Ward
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2001		

Age group 5–11	Inspection dates 25–26 January 2007	Inspection number 287342
--------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Gabriel's is a smaller than average sized primary school. Its social context is no more or less favourable than most schools. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Pupils' attainment when they start school is about average overall, but their language and literacy skills are generally below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Almost all the pupils are from White British backgrounds, but a few have joined the school recently at the early stages of learning English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Gabriel's is a good school because it is equally successful in nurturing pupils' personal qualities and ensuring they reach high standards in their work. Excellent relationships create a very happy, caring environment, much valued by parents, which supports pupils' learning very effectively. As a result, they make good progress across the school. By Year 6 this leads to high academic standards and pupils who are confident, articulate and well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Children get a good start in the Reception class because interesting activities and good teaching help them do well in all aspects of their learning. In Years 1 and 2, good teaching capitalises on pupils' positive attitudes to learning and ensures they make good progress. Pupils continue to improve in Years 3 and 4, but the rate of progress is slower. Lessons are not always organised well enough to ensure pupils get the most out of the activities and attitudes are not as positive as in other classes. Leadership has identified these weaknesses and is tackling them. In Years 5 and 6, high quality teaching helps pupils make rapid progress. Over the past few years this has led to steady improvement in the results of Year 6 national tests, with high attainment evident in 2006.

Pupils enjoy school, are generally very keen to learn and their behaviour is exemplary. They respond well to the high expectations of the staff and thrive on the praise they receive for trying hard with their work. A good range of experiences ensures they know a lot about being healthy and staying safe. They contribute well to the school community, particularly through the extra responsibilities carried out by the older pupils. They are thoughtful about the wider community, for example through their fundraising for charity. Good levels of basic skills prepare them well for the future. The curriculum is rich and interesting, which helps pupils enjoy their learning and reach good standards in many subjects. Good provision in the Foundation Stage has a strong emphasis on practical activities, which helps the children make good progress.

Good leadership and management have enabled the school to improve pupils' achievement considerably over the past few years. Leaders are quick to identify when pupils may be at risk of underachieving and they take concerted action to seek improvement. The school has a clear view of its own effectiveness, even though it rates a few aspects of its work too highly. It has a good capacity to make further improvements and provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of learning in Years 3 and 4 so that pupils make the same good progress seen in other classes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children do well in the Reception class because the teaching nurtures their enthusiasm for learning and includes a rich range of new experiences. By the time they join Year 1, standards are above average. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2, responding to good teaching and building their basic skills well. Results of national tests at the end of Year 2 have varied from average to high, depending on the ability of each small group of pupils. Current standards in Year 2 are above average. Progress slows in Years 3 and 4 because lessons are not always organised well enough to ensure pupils learn quickly. In Years 5 and 6, pupils are very keen to do well and the work is varied and challenging. Pupils achieve very well and this is reflected in the high standards they reach. Pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the few learning English as an additional language, make the same good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school is good at developing pupils' personal skills and encouraging positive attitudes to learning. As a result, the pupils really enjoy school. One pupil spoke for many when she said, 'I like all the lessons because the teachers make them fun', which explains why most pupils are very keen to learn. Pupils are friendly, polite and exceptionally well behaved. Relationships are outstanding. A typical comment was, 'Everyone is very friendly and, if you're feeling lonely, someone will help you.' This respect for each other was evident in lessons and around the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because lots of experiences develop their understanding of themselves and their place in the wider world.

Pupils understand how to take care of themselves. They know that exercise and eating the right things are important for good health. Pupils feel safe in school because the adults take good care of them. They know how to stay safe out of school. They make a good contribution to the school community through extra responsibilities such as being a playground leader. The school council gives pupils a valuable voice in school matters.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good and often outstanding teaching helps pupils learn quickly. The exception is in Years 3 and 4, where learning is satisfactory. Teachers' outstanding relationships with pupils help them promote successful learning. For example, older pupils who were challenged by writing were motivated very skilfully by the teacher, who knew just how to capture their enthusiasm. Teachers match tasks well to pupils' needs, which helps

pupils take the next step in their learning. The outstanding teaching uses a good range of tasks to help pupils make rapid progress, as seen when Year 2 pupils wrote about characters in 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. Where teaching is satisfactory, the work planned for the lesson is appropriate, but the organisation does not ensure that pupils get on with their work quickly enough.

Good systems for tracking pupils' progress help the school identify areas for improvement. For example, the school has a strong focus on improving pupils' writing because it was correctly identified as a weakness. Pupils have learning targets, which are used well to help them know what they are aiming to achieve. Careful assessment of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the setting of precise learning targets for them, ensure they make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

An interesting and varied curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and contributes effectively to their good academic progress and enjoyment of learning. Over the past few years the school has developed the quality of the curriculum considerably, particularly in information and communication technology (ICT). Many different subjects are linked to make learning more exciting and meaningful for the pupils. Around the school, attractive displays of pupils' work celebrate the richness of the curriculum, such as interesting work about Ancient Egypt. Pupils use their basic skills, such as writing, to support their learning in other subjects. Good provision for personal, social and health education successfully develops pupils' understanding of citizenship, staying safe and keeping healthy. Pupils' learning is enriched effectively by a good range of visits, visitors and after-school clubs, mainly for the older pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Levels of care are outstanding and support and guidance for pupils' learning are good. Excellent relationships and a very caring environment ensure pupils are safe, happy and ready to learn. As governors say, 'It's not just a school, it's a family.' This echoes the views of many parents, who value the pastoral work of the school very highly. Child protection and all other checks to safeguard pupils' well-being are securely in place. The school has strong links with other agencies to support pupils' learning needs. For example, an effective programme has been put in place rapidly to support pupils speaking little English who joined the school recently. This type of provision ensures that all pupils are fully involved in all activities and make good progress. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully and targets are set to enable them to work to the best of their capabilities. Teachers' marking tells pupils what they have done well, but is not always clear about how they can improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Over the past few years, good leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteacher has enabled the school to improve considerably. They have built on the school's strengths in nurturing pupils' personal development by adopting a much more rigorous approach to improving academic achievement. As a result, standards in Year 6 have risen from average at the previous inspection to high now. Good self-evaluation gives leaders a clear picture of the school's strengths and areas for development, leading to very specific priorities in the school improvement plan. For example, by checking carefully on pupils' progress, managers identified a weakness in writing skills. This led the school to introduce a range of new teaching methods and resources, which have been successful in raising standards. The school has good systems for checking on the quality of pupils' learning. Lessons, teachers' planning and pupils' work are monitored carefully and action is taken to improve learning. Governors know the school well, are fully involved in plans for improvement and keep a close eye on the school's progress. Good leadership and management ensure that all children are fully involved in all aspects of learning and school life.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

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	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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	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.

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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for a warm welcome, and for being so helpful, when we visited your school to find out how well you are doing. Your school does a good job in lots of ways, but we found one way in which it could be even better. The strengths we found are:

- you really enjoy school and like the way that everyone gets on well together
- there are lots of interesting things to do in lessons and you say they are fun
- you work hard and you are making good progress
- you have produced some good work in information and communication technology
- you are polite, helpful and your behaviour is excellent
- you are keen to learn and you enjoy the wide range of activities in school
- you think the teachers try hard to make sure that lessons are challenging
- you know a lot about being healthy and staying safe
- special jobs for the older pupils are an enjoyable way of helping everyone in school
- you learn quickly because the teaching is good and often outstanding
- there are good opportunities for you to learn about a wide range of things
- you really enjoy the clubs at lunchtime and after school
- you like the way the staff take care to make sure you are safe and happy.

We would like the children in Years 3 and 4 to take particular note of how we think the school can improve.

- In Years 3 and 4, you have not been making as much progress as you could because lessons have not helped you to get on with your work quickly enough. We have asked the school to make sure that lessons are well organised so you can concentrate on your work and make better progress. You will have to work hard as well!

Thank you for helping me with the inspection of your school.