

The Blessed Sacrament Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119604
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	291478
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Lynne Read

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	390
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Spencer
Headteacher	Mrs Angela Pye (Acting Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2002
School address	Farringdon Lane Ribbleton Preston Lancashire PR2 6LX
Telephone number	01772 792572
Fax number	01772 655365

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2007
Inspection number	291478

© 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 three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average primary school serves an urban area where many families have the support of social services. The proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is much higher than average. When they enter the nursery, children's attainment is below that usually seen. There is a much higher proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than in most schools. The majority of pupils come from White British or Irish backgrounds and a few have Asian or African heritage. The school has experienced a period of disruption due to staffing absences and changes in teaching and management personnel. At the time of the inspection, the acting headteacher had been in school for less than one week.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Blessed Sacrament Primary is a satisfactory school that gives satisfactory value for money. This judgement matches the school's own evaluation of its performance.

Achievement at the school is satisfactory although standards are below average and need to rise, particularly in English, mathematics and science. Many improvements have taken place within the past two years in teaching and management. These include better assessments, careful checking of pupils' progress and the setting of challenging goals for learning. Consequently, achievement in Key Stage 1 is now good and attainment has improved, with Year 2 pupils working at around the expected level. Similar good improvements in progress are evident in some classes in Years 3 to 5 but not at Year 6 where disruptions in staffing have caused a loss of continuity in learning. Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and is good in some classes. However, the proportion of good lessons is not high enough for the school to meet its own targets for improving attainment and achievement. Children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress but do not have enough opportunities to explore and investigate in Nursery. In the Reception classes, they make sound progress in early writing and mathematical skills but their early reading skills are not promoted well enough.

Personal development, including behaviour, is satisfactory and pupils say they like coming to school. They make a sound contribution to the school community by taking on a range of jobs, for example, older pupils lead games for the younger ones on the playground. Such experience of responsibility helps prepare pupils for life in the wider world. The curriculum is satisfactory and is enhanced by opportunities for pupils to visit places of interest. Music has a strong tradition in school with many pupils learning to play an instrument. Lessons place an emphasis on personal and health education and, as a result, pupils are able to make informed choices about their lifestyles. Links with other schools and agencies support learning soundly. Most parents have confidence in the school. Some are rightly concerned about staff changes and the temporary nature of leadership; governors are fully aware of the concerns and are doing all they can to rectify matters.

Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory although most has been completed within the last two years. Good leadership from the deputy headteacher has helped to maintain a concerted drive and give direction at the school during changes in teaching and management personnel. Attention to safety issues, including checking on the suitability of staff is good. Staff morale is buoyant. Having seen initial successes, teachers are eager to move on and there is sound capacity for the school to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve provision and learning in Nursery and Reception classes, especially in providing more opportunities for children to work independently and in promoting early reading skills.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Although the school has below average standards, achievement is satisfactory. Some good improvements in the progress pupils make have been seen this year. The school's development plan focuses sharply on continuing to raise standards.

When children enter Nursery, their attainment is below average. Progress in this and the Reception classes is satisfactory overall but there are differences between the areas of learning. Skills of independent learning do not develop well enough in Nursery and progress in early reading skills during Reception is not good enough. A scrutiny of work, lesson observations and reliable school records show that attainment for the current Year 2 pupils is broadly average and they have made good progress. The good number of pupils working at the higher Level 3 represents a major improvement on previous years.

There is also evidence of good achievement in Years 3 to 5 as teachers and pupils work hard to reach challenging learning goals. From a below-average starting point at Year 3, many pupils are now making above the expected progress year on year. There are however, variations in the rate of learning between classes which are directly due to the quality of teaching. The present Year 6 pupils have experienced disruption in their learning because of major staffing changes. Progress for this year group is satisfactory but not as good as was anticipated at the start of the year and standards remain below average. The school met its targets in 2006 and is on course to do so again this year. Boys and girls do equally well. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities have sound support in lessons so they have full access to the curriculum and do as well as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, are satisfactory. Pupils are well behaved and say they like coming to school. Those pupils who have emotional difficulties are helped to cope with the conventions of school life especially through a new programme of work that has been introduced. Rules are known and underpinned through an established system of rewards and sanctions. Pupils say that adults are constantly on hand and deal swiftly with any report of bullying. Pupils collaborate with each other and have respect for faiths and beliefs that are different from their own. On the odd occasion when pupils' concentration was seen to lapse, it was because the challenge and pace of the lesson was not meeting their needs.

Pupils are aware about staying safe and the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. They have opportunities to take responsibility, for example, some older pupils have completed training so they are able to lead organised playground activities for the younger ones. Pupils contribute to decision making through their school council and were fully consulted about some recent refurbishments. These factors help to provide a sense of community in school and, together with improved progress, are beginning to establish a secure foundation for pupils' future economic well being. Attendance figures are just below average. The school has satisfactory systems in place to deal with poor punctuality and absence.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory. There is some good practice but the proportion of good lessons is not high enough to boost progress and improve standards sufficiently to meet the school's own aspirations. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory although children do not have enough opportunities to investigate and follow their own interests. The teaching of sounds and letters is not effective in providing a secure base for early reading work.

In Key Stages 1 and 2, routines are well established and pupils know what they are expected to achieve. However, there is a lack of consistency in teaching which leads to differences in the pace of learning. Aspects of good practice are not shared well enough. In most lessons, tasks are set at different levels of difficulty but they do not always challenge the more able pupils fully. Some lessons include a series of short tasks with good use of computers and opportunities for active learning and investigation. In other lessons, pupils sit listening passively to the teacher for too long and there is an over-use of worksheets which require only a limited response from the pupils. Expectations of presentation, endeavour and standards vary considerably. Teaching assistants often provide satisfactory support for pupils who need extra help. On occasions, they are deployed to carry out routine activities such as organising resources or marking rather than being actively engaged in supporting learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum and the range of extra-curricular clubs are satisfactory. Planning is currently being revised to include more practical activities and to provide better links between subjects. 'Themed weeks' and 'super learning days' are now regular features and further interest is provided by visits and visitors. Managers recognise that there is still some way to go in replacing passive and rote learning activities with more open-ended, investigative and problem solving tasks. Information and communication technology (ICT) is promoted satisfactorily across the curriculum, especially through the use of the laptop computers. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The nursery environment is bright and attractive but insufficient use is made of the outdoor learning area throughout the day.

Pupils have regular opportunities to engage with the community, for example by singing for senior citizens and raising funds for charitable causes. The range of this provision has been reduced recently due to staffing difficulties.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Care and support for pupils' personal development ensure that they are starting to become confident and happy learners. The school has valued systems in place for rewarding good effort and conduct, for example, the 'lucky raffle' is prized by the pupils. Classroom support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities helps them take a full part in lessons so they do as well as their peers.

Effective procedures for child protection and for checking the suitability of staff are established and staff work hard to eliminate any possible risks to pupils' safety. Good induction procedures

ensure that children settle well when they start in the Foundation Stage. Pupils are effectively prepared for the next stage in their education through links with the local high schools.

New 'learning targets' have been developed which are proving useful in helping pupils to improve their work. In some classes, pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own work, for example using 'marking ladders', and teachers provide useful comments to help them improve. This supports independent learning well but is not yet consistent practice across school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management have improved well over the last two years and are now satisfactory. New management information systems provide a thorough and constant view of pupils' progress and the performance of each class. They enable managers to check that pupils are achieving what is expected and to intervene where targets are not being met. As a result, progress has improved and attainment in Year 2 is higher this year. Good developments in subject management ensure that provision and progress in English and mathematics are monitored closely. Similar systems are not yet in place for science although these are planned.

Among staff and governors, there is a strong commitment and determination to raise standards and improve achievement. Mistakes made in previous years, when standards remained low, have been fully recognised. Ambitious but realistic plans are in place to maintain the recent good rate of improvement. The effective leadership of the deputy headteacher has provided good direction, together with stability and continuity of approach, during the many changes to staff and management. Very good advantage is being taken of the local authority's ongoing expert support. Governors are using a good range of expertise among their members to support the school and check its performance. Financial reserves have accumulated to an above average level. They have now been allocated to important areas such as improving the building and resources. Governance is satisfactory and all statutory requirements are met.

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.

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
--	-----------------------

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?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
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	3
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	3

Personal development and well-being

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

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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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

14 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Blessed Sacrament Catholic Primary School, Lancashire, PR2 6LX

Thank you very much for the warm welcome and for helping my colleagues and me when we came to visit your school. I would like to tell you what we found.

The Blessed Sacrament School is a friendly place. We really appreciated the way you helped us to find our way around school. It was good to see you getting on so well and taking good care of each other. You follow school routines and rules well and are developing a firm sense of self-discipline. You enjoy your learning, especially when you use the computers or have practical tasks to complete.

The adults in school work hard to make sure you are happy and safe. Please thank your parents for sending us lots of replies to the questionnaire. Most of them are pleased with the school. Several parents are a bit worried about the many changes that have happened but you all seem to have coped well. Perhaps you could tell your parents about the work of your school council and the good ideas you all had for the recent building improvements in school.

Your progress in lessons is getting better - well done! With continued hard work you can do even better! We know that some of you enjoy extra challenges so we have asked your teachers to make sure that these are always included in your lessons. The amount and quality of work that you are expected to do varies between lessons so we think it would help if your teachers expect your best all of the time so you can be really proud of yourselves. We also think that the Nursery children would enjoy more time for finding things out and exploring. The Reception children need more early reading work and time for practising sounds and letters. They told us that they like books so they should enjoy that.

Thank you once again for the interesting conversations we had and for letting us know your views so clearly. Please accept my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Lynne Read

Lead inspector