



St Oswalds Roman Catholic Primary School, Accrington

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119657
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 291494
Inspection dates 5–6 December 2006
Reporting inspector Penny Parrish

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Hartley Avenue
School category	Voluntary aided		Accrington, Lancashire
Age range of pupils	3–11		BB5 0NN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01254 234924
Number on roll (school)	168	Fax number	01254 871698
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Father Patrick Bourke
		Headteacher	Mrs Monica Rushton
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2001		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 5–6 December 2006	Inspection number 291494
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Oswald's is a smaller than average primary school. It serves the Catholic community on the outskirts of the Lancashire town of Accrington, though almost half the pupils on roll are not Catholic. The locality has high levels of social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average and an above average number are identified with learning difficulties and disabilities. About two thirds of the pupils are of White British background. A third of the pupils are of Pakistani heritage and about half of these pupils are in 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 Oswald's is a good school, providing good value for money. The headteacher gives a strong lead to an effective staff team. Effective leadership and management, based firmly on the school's Catholic values, result in good achievement, progress and personal development for all pupils. Parents think very highly of the school's work and there is a waiting list for entry. Although the school has a clear view of its own work, judgements for most aspects are too modest. The school judges its work to be satisfactory; the inspection judges it to be good.

The school is a welcoming and friendly place, and pupils settle well to learning. On admission to the Nursery, children's attainments vary but are well below average overall. Good teaching ensures that, by the time the children leave the school in Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are at least average. Action taken by the school to improve the assessment and tracking of pupils' attainment and progress has improved markedly and standards through the school are on an upward spiral. Achievement is good for all groups of pupils, including those for whom English is an additional language and those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Test results in 2006 reflect these judgements. Since the appointment of the current headteacher two years ago, the school has successfully developed an excellent system for checking the teaching and learning and the good progress of pupils. This is paying off in rising standards but will take time to impact fully on attainment in Key Stage 2 (Years 3 to 6). Improvements are needed in raising the standards attained in writing, particularly by the more able. Although the curriculum has good features, it is satisfactory overall because information and communication technology (ICT) is not sufficiently used in all subjects. Standards in ICT are below average by both Year 2 and Year 6.

At all stages in the school, those learning English as an additional language benefit from the school's good provision for the development of speaking skills; this is also a key strength in the good development of all pupils' personal and social skills. The school ensures that those with learning difficulties and disabilities have their needs met well and that they make good progress.

The governing body has overcome many challenges well in recent years to remain effective in playing its part in the leadership and management of the school. New appointments and initiatives are leading significant improvements in the sound support governors provide for the school. In the last two years especially, the school has taken effective action to resolve significant issues from the last inspection, showing a good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing, especially for the more able pupils.
- Raise standards in ICT.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good for all pupils. The school's records clearly show good, and sometimes very good, progress for almost all pupils from the well below average starting point in the Nursery. On admission, girls' attainments are generally higher than boys but the school is successful in closing this gap and by Year 6, boys attain as well as girls. Effective teaching, as well as a curriculum and reward system that motivate boys as well as girls, is improving standards for all.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Strong links with the church, engaging assemblies and other discussion times support the development of good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are polite and welcoming. Good relationships result in a happy and purposeful learning environment. Behaviour is good and frequently exemplary, but over-boisterous behaviour occasionally reduces learning where class management is less skilled. Pupils develop a good sense of responsibility through acting as members of the school council, for example, or managing the sale of healthy snacks at break times. They have opportunities to respond to the needs of others, for instance through raising funds for charitable causes. They appreciate the importance of a healthy lifestyle and are well informed about staying safe.

Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. The school provides a sound foundation for the pupils' future economic well-being through the good development of good basic skills but weaknesses in their knowledge and use of ICT reduce an otherwise good picture to satisfactory. Attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good, overall, and ranges between satisfactory and outstanding. Good relationships and interesting activities enhance the quality of teaching and ensure that pupils enjoy learning. Exemplary assessment systems help staff to focus their teaching successfully on the differing needs of the pupils, including the more able, those who need extra help and those with English as an additional language.

Lessons typically proceed at a good pace. They are prepared well and backed by good resources, such as electronic whiteboards. Pupils have ample opportunities for discussing their thoughts and ideas in small and large groups. As well as providing much needed development of pupils' language skills, this promotes learning and

personal development well. Occasionally, where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, these discussions are less effective and slow pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum that is lively and interesting and has many good features that meet pupils' needs well. The clear focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy across the curriculum contributes well to their good achievement. Teachers do this less effectively in ICT and, consequently, pupils miss valuable opportunities for learning.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well in class and through extra provision, enabling good progress. The school's arrangements ensure that pupils in the mixed-age classes avoid repetition.

Pupils enjoy learning French and also the good range of extra curricular activities that include clubs, educational outings, residential visits and visitors into school. Parents are appreciative of this aspect of the school's work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Exceptionally good assessment and monitoring systems mean that staff know all pupils and their differing needs very well. The individual guidance and support provided for pupils are extremely effective in helping pupils to make good progress. Innovative systems for rewarding effort, success and good conduct underpin the good personal development of pupils. Younger pupils are thrilled to take their 'spaceman' up another step towards the spaceship, for example, as the reward for gaining a level of learning while older pupils enjoy an extra move for their football towards the goal as they progress to a new level of learning. The 'gold award' assembly and the 'class of the week' award are highly prized by the pupils.

Pupils are safeguarded well because the school makes essential checks on staff and has rigorous and well-established procedures for child protection, security and for eliminating possible risks. Parents are helped to promote their children's learning through good information about targets and plans for learning. The school works well in partnership with other professionals and outside agencies to support pupils, especially those who need extra help.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Inspired leadership and management have put the school on an upward trend. The headteacher provides a very strong lead, showing a good understanding of what needs to be done. She is supported increasingly well by the assistant headteacher and subject leaders. Working together as a strong team, they have improved the school's

performance substantially since the headteacher's appointment almost two years ago. The school's self-evaluation is accurate but does not give full credit to recent developments. The school's performance shows particularly good improvement over the past year.

Each teacher has several leadership responsibilities. The governing body has come through a time of great difficulty and change since the last inspection when their work was an issue for improvement. Governors now provide sound back-up to the school's improving provision and take a pro-active role in monitoring the success of the school. The enthusiasm of the staff and governors and the successes achieved in recent years show that the school has a good capacity for further improvement. The allocation of financial resources to ensure the best provision for pupils is well managed. Following a longstanding accumulation of unspent funds, plans are well in hand to achieve necessary improvements to the buildings and grounds.

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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?	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	3
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	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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?	3
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?	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	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

St Oswald's Roman Catholic Primary School

Hartley Avenue

Accrington

Lancashire

BB5 0NN

8 December 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for the very friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. You helped us to enjoy our visit very much and to find out all we needed to know about how well you work and learn. We noticed that you are friendly, kind and thoughtful with each other too, so your school is a happy place.

Your school is good and we know your parents are rightly pleased with the way staff care for you and help you to learn well. We were impressed with how much you knew about your work and how to improve your learning. You deserve the good rewards the school gives you for working hard. Because most of you and your teachers work so hard, your learning has improved well over the past two years especially. Standards are getting better and better in literacy and numeracy, and moving forward in science now that you are planning more of your own investigations.

There are just two things where you need to get better.

- There is still more to be done to improve your writing and we know you will try your best to work with your teachers to improve your writing.
- In information and communication technology (ICT), standards are not quite high enough and we think you need to have more opportunities to use the computers to help you to develop your skills.

With our very best wishes to you for your continued success and happiness.

Mrs Penny Parrish and Mrs Yvonne Clare

School Inspectors