

Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119658
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	291495
Inspection dates	22–23 May 2007
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 category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	209
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Hogan
Headteacher	Mrs Jacqui Williams
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2002
School address	Bradshaw Row Church Accrington Lancashire BB5 4HG
Telephone number	01254 233382
Fax number	0000

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves an urban area with considerable social and economic deprivation. An above average proportion of pupils receive free school meals. The school provides extended care through a breakfast club and an after school club. Over half of the pupils are White British. About a quarter are of Asian Pakistani heritage and speak English as an additional language, though only a small number who have recently joined the school are in the early stages of acquiring the language. About a tenth of pupils are of Traveller heritage and a higher number of pupils than average leave or join the school at other than the usual times. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Children's skills when they start school in the Nursery are below those which are typical for their age.

At the time of the inspection, a new Foundation Stage unit had been open for only two weeks. The rest of the school had suffered disruption due to the installation of a corridor to enable classes to work with fewer interruptions.

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 and gives satisfactory value for money. Pupils make satisfactory progress in all key stages in English, mathematics and science and standards are below average. This is an improvement on the school's records over recent years, which show there has been a lack of consistency through the school. There is clear evidence that with good support from the local authority, the situation is now stabilised. Progress has improved in writing following a concerted effort by all staff and this is a significant step forward. Most pupils in Year 6, for example, use a lively style of writing that is captivating to read, though some have weaker skills in punctuation and handwriting. There remains a group of pupils, however, who make satisfactory progress overall but who are capable of achieving more. This applies especially to some of the pupils who do not reach the standards set nationally for their age. Children's achievement and progress in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory overall and good for personal and social development. Standards by the end of the Foundation Stage are below average.

Those new to learning English are making satisfactory progress overall and good progress with language skills because they receive good support from the bi-lingual teaching assistant. Some of the pupils with a Traveller heritage have attendance problems and this reduces the pace of their progress but all are helped to achieve satisfactorily by teaching assistants linked to the Traveller Support programme.

Most parents are pleased with the education that the school gives their children. One stated, 'The school has a good Christian ethos and welcomes all cultures.' The school is a calm and orderly environment where pupils develop social skills and learn how to be responsible citizens as they work and play together. Pupils have a good awareness of what they must do to stay healthy and they enjoy the fruit provided at playtimes and plentiful opportunities for exercise. Most pupils enjoy school and behave well, though a small group of older boys have episodes of poor behaviour, which result in temporary exclusions. Attendance has been below average for some years, mainly due to frequent absence by a small group of pupils and extended family holidays taken in term time. Regular attendance is improving now that the school has adopted a more rigorous approach to rewarding good attendance and tackling persistent absence more decisively.

The pupils' satisfactory academic and social development is due to sound teaching, and a well-planned curriculum that promotes the basic skills and creative subjects, such as art and music. Pupils are cared for well but a weakness in provision is the school's lack of effective use of information gained from assessment. As a result, the school's development since the last inspection has been impeded. While the school has put a range of assessment systems into place, they have not been used well enough to make sure that all pupils are progressing well. The headteacher, working in partnership with senior managers, provides sound leadership and has successfully brought about improvements to pupils' behaviour in recent years and arranged improvements to the school's accommodation. Senior managers check the school's provision but do not focus on areas for development with sufficient rigour. The expectations set for pupils are not always high enough. Governors are keen to support the school but do not sufficiently hold it to account for its standards. Nonetheless, the capacity to improve is satisfactory because staff and governors are fully committed to the school and are ready to act upon advice. The school is currently involved in a rigorous programme of support led by the local authority. Recent actions are bringing about improvements in the use of review and

assessment and, consequently, the quality of teaching and learning. More time is needed for these improvements to impact on standards in the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in English, mathematics and science to enable more pupils to reach the expected level for their age.
- Improve the use of assessment systems to enable teachers to match their planning more closely to pupils' learning needs.
- Add rigour and precision to self-evaluation systems to strengthen school improvement and check the success of actions taken.

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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards are below average. Although there is evidence of good progress in lessons for some pupils, most make satisfactory progress overall.

Children's achievement and progress in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory overall and good for personal and social development. Although some reach the targets set nationally for the end of Reception, for most children, attainment remains below average overall.

Results in national tests in Year 2 and Year 6 have been below the national average for some time, and targets set for improvement have not always been fully achieved. This year, however, there are signs of a move forward. The proportion of higher attaining pupils has increased in writing in Year 2 and Year 6, rewarding staff for extra efforts made over the past year. The school and the local authority are aware of the need to improve achievement and raise standards further in English, mathematics and science. Differences in attainment between girls and boys vary from year to year and show no significant differences overall by Year 6.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have enough support to enable them to make adequate progress towards their individual targets. Support from the Travellers' Education Service helps those with a Traveller heritage to make satisfactory progress when they are in school. Those using English as an additional language make sound progress and those in the early stages make good progress with speaking English because they receive effective support from a bi-lingual teaching assistant.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. The Catholic faith is a strong thread running through provision and other world faiths and cultures are given sound support. Pupils' relationships with staff and each other are good; there is a calm and orderly atmosphere in the school. Pupils generally show positive attitudes to school and are receptive to learning. Behaviour is satisfactory, overall. Although almost all pupils behave well, there are incidents of poor behaviour by a small group of older boys. Some pupils express concern at the disruption this sometimes causes to learning. Attendance is below average but improving following the introduction of a range of imaginative

and more rigorous strategies to encourage and reward good attendance. Pupils have a good awareness of the need for a healthy diet and participate readily in physical activities. They say they always feel safe in school; confident that occasional incidents of bullying, poor behaviour or racial harassment will be dealt with promptly by staff. Those elected to the school council or chosen as 'playground buddies' show a good sense of responsibility for improving the school and older pupils enjoy helping to care for younger ones at playtimes. Preparation for the next stage of education and future employment and economic well-being are satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Lessons are planned carefully and matched closely to national guidance but teachers do not always make full use of information available from assessment. Consequently, some of the more able pupils are taught what they already know and for the less able, different approaches are not always sought to improve the pace of their learning. This lack of precision extends to the marking of pupils' work which congratulates good effort but does not point out clearly enough successes and where learning needs to improve. As a result, learning for most pupils is satisfactory rather than good and some pupils do not make as much progress as they could over time. In a minority of lessons, pupils are actively engaged in interesting and well-thought-out tasks; in such lessons, the teacher's enthusiasm and good subject knowledge, combined with good feedback to pupils, ensures that learning is good. Where teaching assistants are used effectively, they support and extend pupils' learning well. There are times, however, especially during whole-class sessions, where their role is underdeveloped; they do not interact enough with pupils or support assessment when the opportunity arises. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported with sensitivity to enable satisfactory learning. The bi-lingual teaching assistant provides effective support for pupils in the early stages of learning English, although liaison with teachers is sometimes limited, missing some opportunities to help pupils progress even faster.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with some good features. It meets statutory requirements and the needs of most pupils, including those learning English as an additional language. The recent purchase of more laptop computers has helped the school to close gaps in pupils' learning in information and communications technology (ICT). The school's enthusiastic focus on art and music enables pupils to demonstrate their creative talents. Pupils with specific learning difficulties are provided with individual education plans that help them make sound progress. Programmes available to the school to provide help for lower attaining pupils are not maintained consistently enough to ensure continuous support year-on-year. The curriculum is adequately enriched through educational visits, such as to the Roman museum at Ribchester and to a local art gallery. Effective links with the local high school provide good opportunities for older pupils to extend their learning; such as, for pupils in Year 5 to learn French. Pupils enjoy and benefit from the good range of sports, musical activities and clubs made available. Changes in accommodation and arrangements for the Foundation Stage have disrupted provision; there has been insufficient time for staff to establish new systems that take full advantage of the new facilities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support for pupils are satisfactory. The school has made great effort to create an environment that is safe and secure but also attractive and welcoming. The pupils' health and safety is ensured through effective risk assessments and safeguarding procedures. Pupils find adults friendly, supportive and approachable when they need help. Welcoming induction systems help children new to the school to settle quickly into daily routines. Good transition arrangements help pupils in Year 6 to feel confident about the transfer to high school. The school provides a healthy diet and plenty of opportunity for exercise. The breakfast, after school and homework clubs show that the school is responsive to the needs of pupils and the local community. A recent review of provision for those with learning difficulties has led to an improved match between pupils' individual needs and the learning targets set for them. The school collects useful data for tracking pupils' progress but is at an early stage of using the information productively to improve learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has a broadly accurate knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. Senior managers collect a lot of data about the school's performance but do not always use this information effectively to identify the key priorities for development or to evaluate how successful their initiatives have been. The result is that the information has not been used effectively enough to raise standards at a good rate. However, the school has improved its focus in recent months as a result of working in partnership with the local authority. A number of initiatives have been introduced that are beginning to have an impact on the quality of teaching and learning, though they have not yet had time to show a significant improvement in standards. Teachers have worked hard to introduce and sustain more effective methods, despite dealing with disruptions caused by building work.

Governors are keen to support the school and have helped to ensure that it has all the required policies and safeguarding checks. They are not, however, sufficiently involved in holding the school to account for pupils' standards. After an unsettled period due to unavoidable changes in leadership, the governing body is now complete and ready to move forward. The budget is healthy and the school has demonstrated sound judgement in allocating resources, for example, to improve the school's accommodation and to expanding provision for ICT. Because the headteacher, staff and governors are fully committed to the school, and there have been good recent improvements and a readiness to act upon advice from the local authority, the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

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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?	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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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

24 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School, Accrington BB5 4HG

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly into your school. We enjoyed watching you in lessons and at play; talking about your school with you and your teachers; and looking at your work. These are some of the many things we liked about your school.

- You told us you like coming to school and feel safe there.
- Your teachers and other staff take good care of you.
- We saw that most of you were enjoying your lessons, and we know you like other activities, such as playing sports and making music.
- You know how important it is to eat healthily and take plenty of exercise.
- Behaviour is good for nearly everyone. You listen carefully to the teacher in class and you walk around the school in a sensible way, showing consideration and respect for others. You should be very proud of this.
- You know that you need to come to school as often as you can because when you are absent you are not making progress with your work.

We think you could work with your teachers to make the school even better and this is what we have arranged with your headteacher and the governors.

- We think some of you could do even better work in English, mathematics and science.
- The teachers are going to try to help you learn more quickly by planning carefully for what each one of you needs to do to improve your work.
- The staff are going to look at what is happening in the school very carefully and use all the different sorts of information they have to find out what needs to be done better.

I hope you continue to enjoy the many good things about your school.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Penny Parrish

Lead inspector