



St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Oswaldtwistle

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 119660
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 291496
Inspection dates 9–10 November 2006
Reporting inspector Shirley Herring

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Mayfield Avenue
School category	Voluntary aided		Oswaldtwistle, Accrington
Age range of pupils	4–11		Lancashire, BB5 3AA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01254 231278
Number on roll (school)	236	Fax number	01254 301768
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Father P Bourke
		Headteacher	Mr S Wells
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2002		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 9–10 November 2006	Inspection number 291496
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mary's is an average sized primary school, serving the Catholic Community from a wide area. The vast majority of pupils are from a White British background and a very small number are at an early stage of learning English. Children enter school with skills that are broadly typical for their age. A higher number of pupils than average have a statement of special educational need. Some classes are made up of mixed-age groups. The school is an Eco Green Flag school with Gold Award Status. It has links with other schools in a learning network.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Mary's is a satisfactory school with some strengths. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance rates are above average. The school takes good care of pupils and has appropriate procedures to keep them safe. Pupils, through initiatives such as The Walking Bus, are attempting to live a healthy lifestyle and an abundance of sports activities after school are well attended. The pupils' strong involvement in caring for the environment through recycling and switching off lights develops a growing awareness of economic well-being. Together with their close involvement in parish activities, this helps pupils make a good contribution to the community.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school's outstanding commitment to its work as an Eco School is widely recognised and this makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. The leadership team monitors the work of the school regularly, but does not evaluate the findings systematically. Consequently, some of its self-evaluation judgements are too generous and potential underachievement is not always identified quickly enough. As a result, although achievement is satisfactory overall, progress can vary considerably from year to year.

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children enter school with broadly average skills. They make sound progress in the Reception class and achieve the expected level by the time they enter Year 1. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 and standards are consistently above the national average. In the 2005 national tests for 11-year-olds, standards were above average and achievement was good. However, the 2006 results show a fall in the number of pupils achieving the expected level in English and mathematics. This was because the school did not act effectively enough on the available information, which showed that pupils were underachieving. This was because their learning had been adversely affected by extensive staff disruption in the past. The school has compelling evidence that indicates standards in the current Year 6 are higher than last year and pupils are making satisfactory progress. Inspection evidence supports this view.

Teaching is satisfactory overall and lessons are managed well. Teachers regularly check how well pupils are doing and are beginning to make good use of marking to help pupils understand how they can improve their work. However, they do not use the information they have to consistently plan work to suit the needs of different groups, particularly higher attainers.

The curriculum is satisfactory; it provides well for pupils' personal development and is effectively enriched by a variety of activities. However, there is no whole school approach to curriculum planning; as a result, the school does not regularly check that pupils' skills and knowledge develop systematically in all subjects.

What the school should do to improve further

Implement a consistent, whole-school approach to:

- planning, to include the systematic development of skills

- using the available assessment information to meet the needs of different groups, particularly higher attaining pupils
- identify and remedy potential underachievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Children enter Reception with a range of skills, which are at a nationally expected level. They make sound progress in the Foundation Stage. By the end of the Reception year, standards are broadly in line with national expectations. The good emphasis on personal and social skills enables children to make good progress in this aspect. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 to attain standards that are consistently above average overall; although, standards in mathematics are lower than those in reading and writing.

Pupils make sound progress overall in Key Stage 2 but there is a considerable degree of inconsistency from year to year. In the 2005 national tests, standards were above average in English, mathematics and science. There is little difference between the achievement of boys and girls by the time they leave school. The 2006 results show a significant fall in the number of pupils attaining the expected level in English and mathematics. This is because the available assessment information is not being used effectively to identify and address potential underachievement quickly enough. The school has clear information that shows that standards in the current Year 6 are at least at nationally expected levels. Inspection evidence supports this view.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress at a similar rate to others in their class. The few pupils at an early stage of learning English are well supported and they make sound progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. However, more needs to be done to improve pupils' awareness of multi-cultural issues. Most pupils behave well and take responsibility for their actions. Pupils work hard and get on well with each other. The newly introduced target-setting programme helps pupils to take responsibility for their work. However, opportunities are missed in lessons for pupils to take on further responsibility for their own learning. For example, teachers do not allow them adequate opportunities to discuss their ideas with a partner or in small groups.

Outstanding opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for wider aspects of school life and of issues outside school are provided by the challenges pupils are given with regard to environmental issues. As an Eco School, pupils take full responsibility for the environment and this aspect of the school's work has a major impact on their personal development. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance rates are above average. Playtimes are amiable and active occasions with skipping being an important

past-time. Pupils, through initiatives such as a walk to school week and fruity Friday, are attempting to live a healthy lifestyle. Pupils leave school with personal qualities that put them in a good position to make the most of the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and classroom assistants support pupils' learning well. Good quality relationships and staff's skilful management of pupils are very positive features of life in this school. Teachers assess pupils' learning soundly but do not use this information well when planning future work to ensure that the needs of different groups, especially higher attainers, are met. There are, however, some good examples of marking being used well to provide pointers to pupils as to how they might improve their work. Pupils say that lessons are interesting and one child provided a vivid description of how umbrellas were used in a science lesson to develop pupils' understanding of wind resistance.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum for pupils' personal development is well thought out and forms the highpoint of an otherwise satisfactory curriculum. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are provided for well. Good links with the Catholic High School ensure that the curriculum is enhanced through days such as 'Industry Awareness Day.' The lack of an effective whole-school approach to curriculum planning means the school cannot be certain that there is progression in skill development in all subjects. This is one of the reasons for inconsistent progress in Key Stage 2. The Foundation Stage gives a satisfactory start for young children but opportunities are missed to extend or enrich the curriculum through the planned use of the outdoor area.

The school enriches the curriculum well through educational visits and a range of visitors into the school. The recent visit to the school by a theatre group was said to be 'brilliant' by the pupils. Residential visits to France add a further dimension to the curriculum and support the work the school does in teaching French as a modern foreign language. A wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities allows a large number of pupils to take an active part. Pupils say they look forward to these activities and to learning to play the guitar. The curriculum helps all pupils to develop an enjoyment of learning and the strong emphasis placed on literacy and numeracy sets a firm foundation for their future learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support pupils receive are of a good quality. The school's high level of concern for individuals means that pupils feel safe and valued. Pupils say that

if there is any bullying it is dealt with quickly and most parents agree that their children are looked after well. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are met fully. Government recommendations for safeguarding children are in place. All staff pay careful attention to health and safety issues and child protection. Pupils are well aware of how to stay healthy. One remarked, 'I look forward to the walking bus day.' Pupils are becoming increasingly aware of their individual targets and this is beginning to help them to understand what they need to do in order to reach higher standards. This aspect of the school's work is at an early stage of development and there are still some weaknesses in the guidance and support provided for higher attaining pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher's commitment to the school's Catholic traditions and the successful involvement as an Eco Green Flag School make a good contribution to pupils' personal development. The school monitors its work regularly but has not evaluated the information systematically enough to identify areas for improvement. Consequently, some self-evaluation judgements are too generous. The school has good systems for assessing pupils' progress but has not used the information quickly or effectively enough to identify and remedy potential underachievement. Part of the difficulty has been the unavoidably heavy teaching commitment of the headteacher.

The leadership team is now focused on providing consistency in standards to match the years when standards have been good. As a result of good links with other schools in a learning network, the new deputy headteacher has recently introduced a system for involving pupils more in assessing their own learning. Early indications suggest that this is having some success, for example, in helping older pupils to improve their writing skills.

Governance is satisfactory. There has been adequate improvement since the last inspection, for example, in standards in information and communication technology and in behaviour. This, together with the improved systems to involve pupils in their own learning, indicates a sound capacity to improve further. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

Mayfield Avenue

Oswaldtwistle

Accrington

Lancashire

BB5 3AA

10 November 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making Mr Yates and myself feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and were very impressed by the outstanding work you are doing as an Eco School. We visit many schools but your work on environmental issues is some of the best we have seen anywhere. Well done!

It is clear that you like coming to school and find the lessons interesting. You also enjoy the many visits and the sporting activities after school. We enjoyed listening to the guitar group practising the Christmas Carols.

As part of any inspection, we make suggestions as to how the school could improve. At St Mary's we have asked the teachers to plan different work for the various groups in lessons so that everyone can make good progress. We have also asked the school to look at the results of your tests at the end of the year more closely and give help quickly to anyone who is falling behind.

Continue to work hard for the environment and good luck with your Christmas activities.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Shirley Herring

Lead Inspector