

Guardian Angels Roman Catholic Primary School, Bury

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105334
Local Authority	Bury
Inspection number	308834
Inspection dates	13–14 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Steve Rigby

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	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Ponka
Headteacher	Mr J Harrison
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2003
School address	Leigh Lane Bury Lancashire BL8 2RH
Telephone number	0161 7644014
Fax number	0161 7644014

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	13–14 November 2007
Inspection number	308834

© 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

The school is of average size and typical of an urban school serving an area of mixed housing. The majority of pupils are of White British origin with very few who speak English as an additional language. Children's levels of skills on entry to the school are broadly in line with those expected for children of their age. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is much lower than that found nationally. The proportion of pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. The school has been awarded the National Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

On entering the school, the pupils' enthusiasm for learning is immediately evident. There is a friendly and welcoming atmosphere from staff and pupils alike. A view reflected by the vast majority of parents is that the children are keen to come to school 'wondering what delights they will experience that day'. This is a good school, with many features that are outstanding. Attendance and behaviour are of the highest standards and pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of developing a healthy lifestyle through good diet and exercise.

Excellent leadership and management by the headteacher and the commitment of the staff in ensuring that the care, guidance and support given to all the pupils is of the highest quality ensures that pupils feel safe and secure. The quality of the teaching is good and well planned. It is often of an outstanding quality within Key Stage 2. In the best lessons work is well matched to the needs of all pupils and is challenging. Teachers stimulate pupils' interest with very effective use of visual images often on the interactive whiteboards. In one lesson, pupils were engrossed by the teacher's excellent use of artefacts to explain the storyline painted on Willow Patterned china. This ensures that the pupils' achievement is good.

Throughout the Foundation Stage the children make good progress. Children are very well cared for and make significant strides, especially in their personal and social development. However, standards and achievement in Key Stage 1 have been uneven over the past few years, particularly so in reading and writing. This has been partially the result of variations in the quality of teaching, inaccurate assessment and shortcomings within the curriculum. Current school data show that measures put in place by the school are beginning to bear fruit, although more remains to be done. Current data show some improvements already in standards and achievement in writing. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards are significantly above average in English, mathematics and science. All pupils achieve well with many developing a genuine love of learning which prepares them well for their future learning and the next stage of their education.

Since the last inspection all recommended areas for development have been fully addressed. The curriculum has been reviewed so that skills taught in one subject support other subjects and the pupils see the connections and relevance of their learning. Pupils are openly encouraged to explore and investigate for themselves and so become more involved with their own learning. Resources such as the new 'Learning Zone' have been established complete with computers and a reference library to support pupils with their independent learning. This is resulting in helping all pupils and the more able, in particular, to achieve better, especially in Key Stage 2.

The way teachers use the pupils' assessments to aid learning and set targets has also been improved with a strong emphasis on the analysis of all data. This helps the school identify weaknesses and strengths in its practice. In addition, it ensures a closer match of pupils' work to their abilities. This is supported well by a whole-school marking scheme that helps guide pupils onto their next steps in learning.

The school's leaders have been thorough in their analysis of the current data available. For example, the headteacher has communicated to the governing body recent changes in the curriculum and the development of pupils' individual research skills. The school is active in evaluating and monitoring the impact of such changes on pupils' learning.

The school is fully inclusive, providing an appropriate curriculum for all its pupils and directing effective support to the neediest resulting in them making good progress. Partnerships with other schools, agencies and parents benefit pupils' learning well. Pupils' improving research skills continue to enrich learning in other subjects. Consequently, the school provides good value for money and has a good capacity to improve in the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage is well led and managed. The provision in the Foundation Stage is good with all areas of learning being covered well by the curriculum. Teaching and learning are also good with relationships between adults and children being excellent. Children start in the Reception class with skills that are broadly those expected for children of their age. By the end of the Reception year, children's attainment is above the expected levels, although some aspects of early skills in reading and writing are not quite as strong. Especially good progress is made in their personal, social and emotional development. The school is developing links between the Foundation Stage and Year 1 in order to improve the opportunities for pupils' imaginative play. Although provision is good, there is more to do to develop the outdoor area. For example, the school has plans to provide a covered area for working outside and permanent sand and water facilities to allow children greater opportunities to explore different materials.

What the school should do to improve further

- To continue to improve the standards and the rate of achievement of pupils in Key Stage 1.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good overall and standards by the end of Year 6 are high. Children make a good start to their learning in the Foundation Stage. Achievement in Key Stage 1 has been uneven over the past few years. A number of factors have contributed to this and, importantly, the quality of teaching and learning has not been strong enough. Assessments show that the progress made by pupils slows in Years 1 and 2 due to more variable teaching and lack of challenge in the curriculum, particularly in reading and writing. During the inspection, the quality of teaching was good, so improvement is beginning to take place. Progress accelerates rapidly in Key Stage 2 and especially in Years 5 and 6 because of the outstanding teaching and effective additional support and help for the pupils. Parents are especially supportive of the school. Achievement is good, with pupils making good progress so that standards by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science are high. Opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning and research skills have been enriched by the school's newly developed 'Learning Zone'. Pupils have well developed speaking and listening skills that are of a high standard by the time they are in Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those very few pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well in relation to the specific targets set for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils love coming to school with levels of attendance being high. Parents report that even when their children are sick they ask to go to school. Pupils say that they enjoy their lessons very much. They participate fully and tackle tasks with enthusiasm. They take pride in their

school and feel safe and secure. They fully understand that any incidents are taken seriously and dealt with. The school's Christian ethos is central to its work and this leads to the excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. An exceptional learning environment prevails reflected in outstanding behaviour, politeness and as a result, individual pupils' self-esteem flourishes. These outstanding qualities are promoted by staff and result in children showing care and consideration for each other. Pupils act responsibly and make an effective contribution to both the school, through their school council, as well as to the wider community. For instance, the pupils stage plays and concerts for the local senior citizens club. The pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy living. They have supported the introduction of healthy options at lunchtimes and are aware of the importance of a healthy diet and active lifestyle. Such actions have resulted in the school earning the National Healthy School Award in 2007. Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education as they have very good skills in literacy and numeracy and, importantly, have learned to work both collaboratively and independently.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with examples of outstanding teaching in Key Stage 2 classes. Lessons are delivered at a good pace and relationships between pupils and teachers are excellent. In the best lessons work is well matched to the needs of pupils and is challenging. This reflects closer tracking of individual pupils' progress alongside improved teacher planning throughout the school. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 has, until recently, been more variable and has had less impact on moving pupils' learning forward. Occasionally, in some lessons there has been a lack of challenge in the tasks set for the pupils and this has slowed the pace of their learning. An agreed whole-school marking policy has been put in place. This is understood by pupils and is proving effective in supporting their learning by directing them towards their next steps. Classroom support assistants are used well. They help pupils approach their work with confidence, for example, supporting pupils' individual and group research using computers and reference materials.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The reviewed curriculum supports effectively the development of pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy, and speaking and listening. The school has developed a range of themes and topics in the curriculum and this integrated approach is being used very well throughout the school to provide opportunities for pupils to write at length. For example, on the subject of 'Child Labour in Victorian Times', in Year 6 which supported the pupils' learning in history. The school's recently developed research area or 'Learning Zone' is adding considerably to children's full enjoyment during lessons by promoting their independence in their own learning. The school promotes the children's emotional and social well-being through lessons in personal, social and health education. The importance of exercise is well understood by pupils and supported by the close links the school has created with the local high school and sports college. Activities outside lessons and off-site visits are well organised, relevant and greatly enrich the curriculum. These include an annual residential visit to Durham for older pupils. Currently, the school is adding modern foreign languages into its overall curriculum. The school has plans for a covered

area outdoors for use by the youngest children, which will further improve the provision for them.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This is a key strength of the school and is outstanding, particularly in areas of pastoral care. The school provides exceptionally well for its vulnerable pupils. All staff know the pupils and their needs very well and ensure that all pupils are fully involved in everything the school does. The support the school provides for its most needy pupils is very well organised and managed and this is reflected in the good progress these pupils make. Parents and pupils both make a full contribution to pupils' individual educational plans. In addition, support given to pupils who arrive from other countries ensures their smooth integration and transition into the school family. Assessment systems are now thorough and are used very well to guide pupils in their next steps in learning. All aspects of safeguarding children and safe staff recruitment are in fully in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher knows the school and its pupils extremely well. He is an outstanding leader and is particularly skilled in developing the senior leaders into an effective team. The governing body fulfils its role well. It is well informed by the headteacher and they are very supportive of the work of the school. They have responded by working in close harmony with the headteacher and with the school's management team. However, they have not yet evaluated the full effectiveness of their own role as a 'critical friend'. There is a high level of commitment to promoting pupils' enjoyment of learning and providing everyone with the best opportunities to succeed. Challenging targets, specifically in Key Stage 2, are used to good effect and reflect the school's high standards. The school improvement plan is well considered and contributes to ongoing improvements, for example, in improving pupils' writing skills and in improving provision in Key Stage 1. Other initiatives are well focused on promoting pupils' achievement and addressing any shortcomings. The school has developed rigorous monitoring systems to check its effectiveness and any identified shortcomings are addressed in the school improvement plan. This provides the school with a clear and shared direction for the future. It is implicit within this plan that the school will develop clear monitoring systems that will evaluate changes. As the school has now introduced a more integrated approach to the curriculum, it recognises the importance of assessing and monitoring how it is impacting on pupils' learning.

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

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

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?	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.

Annex A

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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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

Inspection of Guardian Angels Roman Catholic Primary School, Bury,
BL8 2RH

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you for the warm and friendly welcome you gave us during our visit. You and your parents think this is a good school where you learn and are taught well. We agree with you.

There are a number of things that we consider are best about your school. You are really well behaved and work hard at your lessons. It seems that you like using the 'Learning Zone' which gives you many chances to work independently and learn lots. We were particularly impressed by your good manners and the great care you show towards one another is superb. We were particularly impressed by the way that all adults in the school care for you and help you all to do your best in both your learning and the way you develop as a person. This is very important for your future. We found that all the staff and governors lead and manage the school well and your headteacher's leadership and management is outstanding. This is very important in helping you to make good progress and reach high standards by the time you leave school in Year 6. Your teachers work hard to make sure that your lessons are busy and full of exciting activities for you to do. This helps you make good progress.

We have asked your headteacher to make sure that all of you in Years 1 and 2 have extra help from the teachers to make sure that you make the best possible progress. This is especially important in your reading and writing.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when we came to see you. We feel sure that you will carry on doing your very best in school. We hope that you continue to work hard and enjoy your schooling.

With very best wishes for the future.