

St Clare's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105554
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	308886
Inspection date	14 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Julie Price Grimshaw

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	410
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Strogen
Headteacher	Mr V Jones
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2004
School address	Victoria Avenue Blackley Manchester Lancashire M9 0RR
Telephone number	0161 7404993
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the progress currently being made by pupils, particularly those in Key Stage 1 and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation; and pupils' access to resources for information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school. Evidence was gathered from published assessment data, the school's own records, parents' questionnaires, lesson observations, and interviews with staff, pupils and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average school serving an area of social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage, and few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that has improved several aspects of its work since its last inspection. Pupils and parents alike comment on the friendly nature of the school, which is increasing in popularity within the local area. The great majority of parents are supportive of St Clare's and typically comment that their children are 'proud to attend'.

Overall, pupils make good progress. Children get off to a very good start in the Foundation Stage and enter Year 1 with standards that are in line with expectations at this age. Some disruption to staffing at Key Stage 1 over recent years has meant that pupils have made satisfactory rather than good progress in Years 1 and 2. However, there is now greater stability in staffing, which is beginning to have a positive impact on improving the rate of progress for these pupils. Pupils' standards by the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly in line with the national average. During Key Stage 2, pupils' progress accelerates as a result of good quality teaching, increased emphasis on high quality assessment and effective personalised guidance. All pupils in this key stage achieve well, with a minority making excellent progress. Standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 have been consistently above average over the last few years. In the past, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made slower progress than their classmates. The school has worked well to address this issue, mainly by providing increased support to these pupils. Current evidence shows that they, too, now make good progress.

Pupils greatly enjoy coming to school. They say that 'the best thing about our school is the way that everyone helps each other.' They are polite and courteous, and almost all show kindness and consideration for one another. The school's effective systems for managing behaviour, based on rewarding those who behave well, are particularly successful. This can be seen in the way in which pupils conduct themselves both in classrooms and around the school. Good systems for pastoral care mean that pupils are confident that there is always an adult to talk to if they are worried. Attendance, highlighted as an area for development in the last inspection report, has improved due to the school's continuous efforts and is now average. Pupils have a good awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles, with a few commenting that they would like more opportunities to take part in sporting activities. They feel safe and secure around school. A small minority of parents expressed some concerns about bullying. However, pupils report that bullying is not an issue and are clearly aware of procedures for dealing with any unpleasantness of this type. The school council carries out some particularly good work in representing pupils' views and organising events, such as the very popular talent show. Pupils are very proud of the work they carry out in raising funds for charity. The school, in partnership with the local church, works successfully to ensure that pupils' social, moral and spiritual development is very good. However, pupils' awareness of faiths and cultures other than their own is limited. Consequently, whilst pupils are well equipped academically for the next stage of their education and the world of work, they are not as well prepared for living in a multicultural society.

Throughout the school, teachers have high expectations and manage pupils' behaviour very well. They communicate very effectively with pupils, and positive relationships support learning in all classrooms. The use of assessment is a significant strength in many lessons, particularly at Key Stage 2. Teachers maintain a very productive spoken and written dialogue with their pupils and, consequently, pupils know exactly how well they are doing and precisely what they need to do to improve further. Pupils really enjoy assessing their own work and that of their

classmates, and they clearly benefit from this. A particularly impressive feature is the way in which some classroom displays are used, not just to create an attractive environment and showcase pupils' work, but to continually support learning through interaction. For example, pupils referred to posters about their goals and targets as well as displays on key words and topic-related resources. Academic guidance is good; challenging yet achievable targets are set for individual pupils. The good quality contribution of support staff is a key factor in the progress made by those pupils with learning difficulties. The school works well with a range of outside agencies to help ensure that the needs of all pupils are fully met.

The curriculum provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills. For example, pupils produced some particularly good written work as a follow up to a practical task in design and technology. Access to resources for ICT has improved since the last inspection and the school has identified additional priorities to develop this area further. The investment of resources in music, physical education and art has resulted in improved provision in these subjects over the last few years. Visits to art galleries and museums effectively enrich the curriculum. There is a satisfactory range of lunchtime and after-school activities.

The headteacher provides strong leadership and articulates a clear vision for the school's future, which is shared by all staff and governors. He and the deputy headteacher have worked successfully in addressing a number of issues identified at the last inspection. A rigorous programme of monitoring has resulted in senior managers having an acute awareness of the school's key strengths and weaknesses, although these are not always fully reflected in documented improvement plans. The role of managers such as key stage leaders has been recently developed. They are now more involved in monitoring the school's work and they play an active role in implementing improvement strategies. There is a clear emphasis on the importance of ongoing professional development for all staff, and this is having a positive impact, particularly on the work of support staff. Governors show commitment both to the school and the local community. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and has good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children's skills on entry to the Nursery are below those typical at this age, particularly with regard to their social skills and language development. Thorough analysis of their needs leads to tailored support and results in children making good progress throughout the Foundation Stage. Activities are very carefully planned in order to maximise learning opportunities and children benefit greatly from the good quality teaching. The emphasis on the development of social and language skills is particularly successful. For example, a group of children in the Reception class were able to explain their painting task in great detail, emphasising the importance of sharing and taking turns. Staff work well in building relationships with parents, and several parents expressed appreciation for the support their children receive in the Foundation Stage, particularly in terms of developing self-esteem. 'My child has gained confidence since starting school', and, 'my child is growing into a happy and confident little girl who loves school', are typical comments. The dedicated and enthusiastic staff try hard to create a stimulating learning environment, but are severely restricted by the nature of the accommodation, which is very cramped. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed. By the end of Reception, most children have met or exceeded the expected learning goals.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend pupils' awareness of faiths and cultures other than their own.
- Improve accommodation in the Foundation Stage.

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Annex A

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
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	2
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	3

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?	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.

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	2
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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you very much for making me so welcome in your school. I really enjoyed talking to you, hearing your views and watching you learn.

You attend a good school. I was especially pleased that you talked about how friendly everyone is, and how you help and support each other. I was very impressed to see how well behaved and polite most of you were, not just to the staff and me but also to one another! You told me that the teachers work hard to make learning fun, and I agree with you. Overall, you make good progress at St Clare's, and some of you make excellent progress. By the end of Year 6, your standards in English, mathematics and science are above average, and you are right to be really proud of this! One of the things that impressed me most was the way that teachers mark your work; I saw some very helpful comments in your books that advised you on exactly what you needed to do to improve further. But even better than this - I noticed that you had written your own comments on your work! You told me that you really enjoy marking each other's work, too, and I can see that you gain a lot from this.

The children in Nursery and Reception get off to a flying start and learn so much, even though the classrooms there are quite cramped. The teachers in Nursery and Reception do their very best to make the rooms attractive, but I've asked the school to think about how the accommodation can be improved for the younger children.

You have a good understanding of the importance of diet and exercise, and I am glad that some of you take care to make sure you are drinking enough water throughout the day. The school council are doing a good job in gathering your views and organising events - the talent show sounded great, I wish I could have seen it! Your links with the church mean that you have a very good understanding of your own faith, but I have suggested that the school looks into ways of extending your knowledge of other faiths and cultures.

Your headteacher and all the staff want each one of you to achieve your full potential at St Clare's. I am really pleased that you are proud of your school, and I wish you well for the future.