

St Herbert's RC School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105722
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	308933
Inspection dates	10–11 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Susan Walsh

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	310
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev P McKie R D
Headteacher	Mrs M Sainsbury
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2003
School address	Edward Street Chadderton Oldham Lancashire OL9 9SN
Telephone number	0161 6331318
Fax number	0161 6265388

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	10–11 December 2007
Inspection number	308933

© 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 three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Herbert's RC School is a voluntary aided Catholic primary school; it is slightly larger than most primary schools. The majority of pupils come from the local parish and an increasing minority come from other areas.

The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is below average overall. However, more pupils are joining the school at the very early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average but the proportion of those pupils with a statement of special educational need is above average. The school has gained the Eco Schools Bronze Award and Healthy Schools Status.

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 standard of education for its pupils. It makes good provision for pupils' personal development and ensures that they are well supported. Its strong caring ethos shines out through the way pupils and staff look after one another. Parents recognise that the school has a 'very good sense of community' and often praise the 'friendly and approachable' staff. Pupils enjoy school because there are interesting things to do and this is reflected in their good attendance. Parents and pupils very much appreciate the wide range of clubs and the very good opportunities for music and sport. Pupils know how to keep healthy and safe, and extend their knowledge and understanding through membership of the Healthy Schools' Forum. Pupils have a strong commitment to the school and wider community. They behave very well and show respect for their teachers and one another.

Achievement over time is satisfactory and standards are broadly in line with the national average. In 2007, standards at the end of Year 6 fell to below average and pupils in Key Stage 2 did not make enough progress. Improvements to the quality of teaching, combined with better management of Key Stage 2 and pupils' positive attitudes to learning, have accelerated achievement. Consequently, pupils' achievement is now satisfactory and they are on track to reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities generally progress at a similar rate to their classmates but those with very complex needs make better progress because they receive very effective support.

Teaching is satisfactory and there is an increasing proportion of lively teaching that motivates pupils and promotes good learning. However, activities are not always sufficiently well matched to pupils' abilities and do not always provide sufficient challenge. Teachers' expectations of presentation and the quality of written work vary considerably.

The headteacher and the leadership team have created a caring community where there is consistent discipline and pupils' personal development has been well supported. However, school leaders have not been as successful at boosting pupils' academic achievement. Although the school knows its overarching strengths and weaknesses, some of its self-evaluation has been overly positive. This is because the school has monitored teaching but has not looked carefully enough at learning or linked this with rigorous analysis of its tracking data to measure the impact of teaching and the curriculum. As a result, school leaders are not always clear on the immediate priorities for improvement. Nevertheless, the school now has a satisfactory capacity to improve, as demonstrated by recent improvement to achievement in Key Stage 2.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage. Children enter the Nursery with skills that are similar to national expectations. They make slow progress in the Nursery because there is insufficient appropriate intervention that moves children's learning on. However, they soon catch up in Reception because of good quality teaching and well planned enjoyable activities that are closely matched to their needs. In the Reception classes staff skilfully develop pupils' vocabulary and use of language. The phonics programme is successfully helping pupils to learn to read and write. Pupils who are just starting to learn to speak English are very well supported and make very good progress. Parents are happy with provision in the Foundation Stage and speak warmly about the approachable and helpful staff. The transition between

Reception and Year 1 is effectively managed. However, leaders have not acted swiftly enough to improve provision in the Nursery.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve provision in the Nursery so that children make quicker progress.
- Raise teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' written work and make certain that tasks are well matched to pupils' abilities and provide sufficient challenge.
- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation is more rigorous and focuses on the impact of provision to secure accurate self-evaluation and raise pupils' achievement.

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 start Year 1 with standards that are similar to national expectations except in writing where standards are below national expectations. Progress is satisfactory through Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 2 pupils reach broadly average standards. Standards dipped in 2007 and by the end of Year 6 they were below average, particularly in mathematics where too few pupils reached the highest level.

Improvements to the quality of teaching and strengthening the leadership of Key Stage 2 have improved achievement to satisfactory in Key Stage 2. Consequently, current standards are broadly average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

As a result of the school's strong focus on personal development, pupils develop confidence combined with very responsible attitudes. They enjoy school and really want to do well. Pupils respond enthusiastically in the really exciting and challenging lessons but their enjoyment is limited when the lessons lack sufficient pace and challenge. Behaviour is good in classes and around school because of the consistently high expectations of standards of behaviour.

Pupils work and play well together and say that there is no bullying. Attendance rates are above average and reflect the way that both pupils and parents value education and the work of the school. The school council provides a good opportunity for pupils to contribute to decision making. Pupils like to help their school community and are actively involved in the wider community, especially through raising funds for charity. Pupils are committed to healthy lifestyles and there are very high participation rates in sport. They are also very aware of how to keep safe. Pupils' preparation for their future learning is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers are committed and enthusiastic and have a real desire to improve their practice. There is an increasing proportion of lively teaching that enthuses and challenges pupils but this is not yet consistent. Relationships between teachers and pupils are warm and supportive and

help pupils to gain confidence. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour but their expectations of their academic achievement and presentation of work are inconsistent. Good work on improving pupils' reading and thinking skills, and lessons about the technical accuracy of writing, are not always translated into good quality written work. The use of assessment information is inconsistent and teachers do not always plan well enough for the needs of all pupils. Classroom support assistants make a valuable contribution to helping lower ability pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities but, occasionally, do not contribute enough at the start of lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

There is satisfactory provision for literacy and numeracy and provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is improving. Although pupils are taught in ability groups for both English and mathematics, work is not always matched carefully enough to pupils' individual needs, particularly in mathematics. There is good provision for pupils' personal and social education; as a result, pupils know how to keep healthy and safe and have good attitudes to learning. Enrichment is good. There is good provision for making music and pupils have been able to develop their skills to a good standard. Themed weeks such as 'The Window on the World', together with the link with a local school, are improving pupils' understanding of other cultures. There are currently not enough effective links made between subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good standards of pastoral care contribute significantly to pupils' enjoyment of school and to their personal development. The school is a very caring community where relationships between adults and pupils are very good. Consequently, pupils feel valued and secure. Vulnerable pupils, including those with very complex needs and those at the early stages of speaking English, are well supported. Parents find the staff very approachable and willing to help if problems arise. Good links with outside agencies and the wider community support pupils' well-being. Child protection and health and safety arrangements are in place. Procedures to check pupils' progress and strategies to support pupils at risk of falling behind are improving but have not had time to impact fully on achievement and standards. Marking does not always tell pupils how to improve their work or refer to their targets, particularly in mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leaders have ensured that the school is a caring place for pupils to enjoy their education safely. The deployment of teaching staff to different classes and the appointment of new staff who are bringing in fresh ideas have strengthened the quality of teaching. The headteacher and senior managers have worked hard to ensure that the dip in results in 2007 has been arrested. Many managers are new to their positions and although some are already having a positive impact on provision, including enhancing personal development and achievement, others are less clear about their roles. The school does not always know enough about the causes of its weaknesses because monitoring and evaluation of its provision has not been rigorous enough. This has resulted in leaders having too positive a picture of some aspects of the school's work. Planning has not always focused on the most important things to do next. Governors are

committed and supportive and they have actively challenged the school regarding weaknesses in achievement and standards in 2007. Staff, governors and the local authority have worked together to improve the schools' target-setting procedures and this is raising expectations.

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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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?	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.

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Thank you for being so friendly and polite when we came to inspect your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and listened very carefully to what you had to say. I am writing to tell you what we found out. You go to a satisfactory school with lots of good things to celebrate, such as the way you are looked after and the way you develop into such delightful, well behaved children. We were very impressed by your lovely singing and by the guitar playing which was super! We enjoyed watching the younger children's nativity play and you really got us into the spirit of Christmas through your Advent assemblies. It was good to hear that you know how to keep fit and healthy and we think you make a good contribution to your school. You told us that you enjoy school, and especially the extra activities such as the sport and music.

We noticed that children in the Reception class are making good progress but children make slower progress in the Nursery so we have asked your teachers to improve the Nursery. Last year's Year 6 pupils did not do so well but you are now making similar progress to pupils in other schools. Teaching is satisfactory overall and it is getting better. We have asked your teachers to make sure that you are set work that is not too easy. You can help by making sure that your writing is very neat and always trying to remember what teachers have taught you about writing whilst you are working.

Your school leaders work hard to make sure the school is a very happy place where you are well cared for. They have lots of information about how you are doing at school and we have suggested that they look more carefully at some of that information so that your school can be even better.