

# St John's Roman Catholic Primary School, Rochdale

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105826
<b>Local Authority</b>	Rochdale
<b>Inspection number</b>	308962
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 July 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Heap

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	250
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Fr Mark Harold
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr J Morgan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 February 2004
<b>School address</b>	Ann Street Rochdale Lancashire OL11 1EZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01706 647195
<b>Fax number</b>	01706 711426

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This average sized primary school serves a diverse population: 84 % of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. This includes: refugees/asylum seekers; traveller families and looked after children. A very high proportion of pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The area has high social and economic disadvantage and more than half the pupils are entitled to free school meals. A large proportion of pupils leave or join the school other than at the usual times. Close to a third of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Extended provision includes a breakfast club and after-school activities/care. The school has successfully achieved the following awards: Healthy school; Activemark; Eco schools - Bronze; Investor in People.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that it is good and gives good value for money. Inspectors also agree that pupils' personal development and the Foundation Stage are particularly effective. These strengths are fostered by: the very caring atmosphere in the school; good relationships between staff and pupils; and the work of the supportive and increasingly challenging leaders and managers. Most parents are very pleased that the school has these strengths and a typical view is: 'My child loves the school, she is very happy. I feel that my child is well cared for and the teachers are very good and friendly.'

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils clearly enjoy school and say so. Nevertheless, attendance is just satisfactory. Despite the school's continuing efforts, there is a significant minority of families that do not value regular attendance. The good curriculum promotes personal development particularly well. Pupils respond well to this and regard the school as a safe and secure place to be. They are also developing extremely good knowledge about the importance of being healthy. The school council contributes exceptionally well to the school community and pupils have an ever widening view of important issues such as the need to safeguard the environment.

By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards are below average. Caution is necessary when interpreting the data because of the high levels of mobility and relatively small year groups. For example, in 2007, only 17 pupils were in the Year 6 class, which means that each pupil represented more than 5% in the totals. Despite these considerations, there is room for standards to rise in English, mathematics and science. Many of the children join the Nursery, and other year groups, with a variety of barriers to learning and, consequently, often have very low levels of skills and abilities. From these beginnings, achievement is good because pupils are taught well and make good progress in their learning. Recent improvements to the school's good self-evaluation procedures include the highly detailed tracking and analysis of pupils' progress. The better range of information about pupils' achievements has led to targets for individual learners and improved lesson planning. However, the marking of pupils' written work does not consistently show how well pupils are meeting their individual learning targets or what they need to do to improve further. The improvements in academic tracking show that pupils are gaining the skills that will prepare them well for their future learning.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, senior leadership team and governing body have recognised the good sense of knowing in great detail how well the pupils are doing academically. Monitoring of the school's provision and evaluation of its impact are increasingly important parts of the school's work. Consequently, standards are rising and the quality of provision is better than at the time of the previous inspection. Leaders have high expectations, but the barriers to learning faced by many pupils and high mobility tends to hold back their progress. School development planning correctly identifies key priorities for the school. Management ensures that good quality care, guidance and support enable all pupils, including the most vulnerable, to achieve well. The school is improving well and its capacity to improve further is also good.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children start in the Nursery with poor language, communication and social skills. They settle quickly into school routines and their personal, social and emotional development is promoted well. Rapid gains in confidence and independence are fostered by activities such as self-registering on entry to their classrooms. Relationships are good and children are happy and well cared for in a safe, secure learning environment. Good teaching and a well planned range of practical activities, including many enrichment experiences, capture children's interest so they make good progress in all areas of learning. However, as children move into Year 1 their skills are well below those expected, especially in writing and mathematical calculation. The good leadership and management ensure a strong emphasis is placed on developing children's social, vocabulary and language skills. Teaching assistants provide invaluable support in this aspect of learning. The outdoor area is used continuously throughout the day, although staff are aware that the range of activities and attractiveness of the area are somewhat limited. This issue is being addressed in the new build planned for the coming year.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Work closely with families to improve pupils' attendance.
- Make marking consistent, so that all pupils have a clear view of their achievements and what they need to do to improve further.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils achieve well. Across the school, standards are best in mathematics and science. Results in national tests at the end of Year 2 have been consistently very weak up to and including 2007, but there is a rising trend. Early indications from the 2008 results are also low but overall results are significantly affected by the high levels of mobility. Pupils who have been in the school for a long period and attend regularly achieve well from their low starting points and their standards are broadly average. There has been an upward trend in results at the end of Year 6; however, the overall picture is still below average. National data show that pupils' progress is improving in Key Stage 2 and the school was in the top third of schools nationally in 2007. Standards in the current Year 6 are lower than last year because the abilities of the pupils vary from year to year. The school is acutely aware that standards must continue to rise and to this end there have been significant improvements in the level of challenge for pupils because of better use of assessment information to adapt the work according to pupils' abilities and improved strategies to support pupils who have significant difficulties with learning. A lot of successful work has been done in conjunction with local authority officers to improve teachers' knowledge and understanding of ways to raise standards. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English are well supported and make good progress. A lot of useful work has been done to provide boys with extra incentives and, thereby, help them to achieve more.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Moral and social development is particularly strong and as a result, most pupils are keen to learn, have good attitudes to their work and behave well. Pupils benefit from the harmonious learning environment which successfully promotes social cohesion. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and typically say, 'we love school because there are lots of practical activities for us to do and teachers give us good support.' Currently, the rate of attendance is rising because the majority of pupils attend regularly. However, a small minority of pupils and the proportion of pupils taking extended holidays have a negative impact on attendance. Pupils are very well aware of the benefits and necessities of staying safe, fit and healthy because of the wide range of physical activities on offer, such as the ones in the current Health and Fitness fortnight. Pupils like the more healthy choices available at snack and lunchtimes. The school council makes an outstanding contribution to the life of the school, for example, in bringing about improvements to playtime games. Older pupils demonstrate good business skills as they organise a class party, costing and ordering the necessary items. Pupils leave school with personal and academic skills that prepare them well for the future.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Lessons are well planned and meet the individual needs of learners. Teachers use questioning and discussion groups or pairs to encourage pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills, promoting their confidence and self-esteem. Good pace, challenge and high expectations promote effective learning in many lessons. Basic literacy and numeracy skills are taught well so that overall, pupils progress well, and particularly so in Key Stage 2. A strong feature in all lessons is the good contribution from skilled learning assistants who support individuals well and also work in partnership with the teacher to provide discrete guidance for the many different needs of the pupils. Where assessment information is used effectively, teachers' improved marking gives pupils a better understanding of the next steps in their learning. In a few classes, assessment information and marking are not always used well enough to ensure pupils understand their own strengths and weaknesses. Opportunities for pupils to assess their own work are at a very early stage of development.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The good quality curriculum promotes personal development well, particularly in ensuring pupils' excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and how to keep themselves safe. Effective planning modifies the academic programme for the individual needs of pupils. For example, the strong support provided by bilingual assistants for pupils learning English as an additional language. Closer linking together of subjects is enhancing the use and development of basic skills. For example, pupils are required to use their information and communication technology (ICT) skills in subjects like mathematics and science. However, there are missed opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills in other subjects. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of after-school clubs, visits and visitors. These effectively extend pupils' learning and help them develop new skills and talents.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils are very well cared for in a happy and welcoming environment. Relationships are good and pupils know there is always someone with whom to talk over any problems. Procedures to ensure pupils' health, safety and well-being are in place and meet requirements. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and other groups with additional learning needs benefit from the good procedures to track academic and personal achievements and, as a result, make good progress. They also respond well to the good support they receive from all staff and other outside agencies as needed. However, inconsistencies in marking mean that pupils do not always know how to improve their work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school that is widely shared by all those involved in its life. The recent improvements in pupils' progress, together with the robust and effective way in which the issues from the last inspection have been dealt with, illustrate the strong and shared leadership. Morale is high in the school. All who are involved in the school work effectively as a team and are committed to the pupils' welfare and progress. Through good self-evaluation and an outstanding commitment to the school, the headteacher has a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses. The capacity for further improvement is good. Planning for improvement rightly focuses on raising standards and also on promoting pupils' personal development. However, the measures of success are not always clear enough about the desired impact on standards or rigorous enough to ensure that everyone is totally clear about their part in the improvement process. Subject coordinators play a full part as monitors and evaluators. Governors carry out their duties well. They play an important role in strategic and financial planning and are purposeful as critical friends in challenging the school to do its best.

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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 <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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

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

My colleague and I thoroughly enjoyed being in your school recently. You generously gave us a warm welcome, treated us with courtesy and provided help and assistance when we needed it. You go to a good school. In a brief letter it is difficult to write about all the good things in your school but here are some of the things I particularly liked.

- The children in Nursery and Reception classes make good progress in their learning, settle to work quickly and grow in the way they can work together and on their own.
- You enjoy school and your parents are pleased that you are there.
- The school council has made some good decisions that have improved playtimes and you are learning about how to look after the environment.
- Your moral and social development is strong and because of this you behave well and have good relationships with adults and other children.
- You make good progress as you move through the school.
- A good range of activities enrich the curriculum and there is a lot of good support for the children who need it.
- The way that the good leadership and management ensure that you are well cared for and seek to improve things for you.

To improve your school further, the staff will help you to achieve even better standards. I know that you will want to help by continuing always to do your best work. Staff will also work closely with your families to make sure that all pupils attend regularly. Finally, I have asked that the marking of your work is the same in all the classes so that you always have a clear picture of how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve further. I am sure you will want to help by always following the advice from your teachers and seeking ways to learn more.

I wish you well. Good luck for the future and make sure that you continue to enjoy school.