

St Veronica's Roman Catholic Primary School, Helmshore

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119589
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313348
Inspection date	17 October 2007
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 category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	146
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss Helen Lord
Headteacher	Mrs Pamela Macro
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2004
School address	Raven Avenue Helmshore Rossendale Lancashire BB4 4EZ
Telephone number	01706 226315
Fax number	01706 226604

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector investigated the overall effectiveness of the school and the following issues: academic achievement, especially in the Foundation Stage and writing in Key Stage 1; personal development; the curriculum; the quality of care, guidance and support, including how effectively the school tracks pupils' progress; and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation document, national published assessment data, the school's records and procedures, parents' questionnaires, observation of the school at work and discussions with staff and pupils. 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 smaller than average primary school at the heart of its parish and local community. Almost all classes have more than one age group, though pupils are taught literacy and numeracy in single age groups. Almost all pupils are from a White British background and the number receiving free school meals is low. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average and no child has a statement of special educational need.

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 where pupils make good progress, achieve well and mature into confident, well-mannered individuals. The outstanding level of care, guidance and support the school provides is recognised and praised by pupils and their parents.

Standards are above average and pupils achieve well. Children enter the school with a range of skills that, overall, are typical for their age. They make sound progress in Reception and most achieve the expectations for their age in all areas of learning by the time they enter Year 1. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 because of consistently good teaching and pupils' excellent attitudes to their work. Standards by the end of Key Stage 1 have been continually above average over a long period. In the 2006 assessments for Year 2, standards were above average overall and were well above average in mathematics. The 2007 results show that standards have been maintained, with an improvement in writing. Pupils' good progress continues through Key Stage 2. After a sustained period where standards were well above average at the end of Year 6, there was a slight fall in performance in the 2006 national tests. Whilst standards were above average overall and standards in English were well above average, not enough pupils reached the higher level of attainment in mathematics and science. The school took prompt action to provide additional support in mathematics and to reorganise the teaching of science. This resulted in an improved performance in 2007, sustaining standards in English, with a high proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels in mathematics and science. Indeed, they exceeded the challenging targets that had been set. The pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive very good support, and so they achieve well.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils are unfailingly courteous and their behaviour is exemplary. They concentrate well in lessons, work cooperatively with each other and get on quickly with their tasks. They take exceptional pride in their work and the presentation of their work does them great credit. Guided by the school's Catholic tradition and the strong links with the local church, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. Pupils enjoy school and their attendance is good. Pupils have a good appreciation of a healthy lifestyle, and the school was awarded Healthy School status in 2007; they enjoy the strong sports programme in school. Initiatives such as the Streetwise programme and the Fire Safety Quiz help pupils to feel safe. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school community through their responsibilities on the school council and as prefects. Many parents of children in Reception praised the 'Buddy System', where an older pupil welcomes a new child into school and helps them to settle quickly. Pupils' good standards in basic skills, their excellent attitudes and experience of working with each other prepare them very well for the future.

Teaching is good and pupils learn well. A strong feature is that teachers make good use of modern technology to support the demonstration of new work and to enhance explanations, so pupils understand what they have to do and can get on quickly. The strong relationships and high expectations of behaviour make a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Teachers use their knowledge of individual pupils to provide additional challenge if necessary, although this is not always reflected in their planning. Classroom assistants make a valuable contribution in lessons and when they work with small groups of pupils.

The curriculum is good and is suitably matched to the needs of all pupils. The emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy skills has resulted in high standards. There has been a good improvement in the provision for information and communication technology since the last

inspection. Pupils use their skills well to support learning in other subjects, for example when converting miles to kilometres to find out distances between cities. For a small school there is an extensive programme of sports, music and other activities to promote enjoyment and extend learning beyond the school day.

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding and this makes an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development and the standards they achieve. All the recommended procedures for safeguarding pupils' are in place and rigorously applied. The school has developed excellent procedures to track pupils' progress and to identify and remedy potential underachievement at an early stage. There is a good programme of additional support in literacy and numeracy so pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. The school makes very efficient use of all the available information on individuals, including useful marking, to help pupils to improve. Pupils are clear about what they need to do to make progress, socially and academically, and are keen to do as well as they can. The excellent relationships within the school community give pupils the confidence to know that any problem will be dealt with sympathetically.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and her leadership team work well together to provide a strong example and clear direction in promoting high quality care in school. Governance is good and supportive of the school. The school's self-evaluation is thorough and accurate in most respects and is used well to move the school forward. The school has very effectively addressed a range of issues and this has had a positive and sustained impact on pupils' achievement. This indicates the school has an excellent capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall and some elements of the provision, such as the close links with parents, are good. Children's skills and abilities on entry to the Reception class are broadly typical for their age. They make sound progress and the majority achieve the expectations for their age in all areas of learning by the time they enter Year 1. The school rightly places great emphasis on children's personal, social and emotional development and so children make good progress in this area. The school has clear assessment information to show that children's achievement is satisfactory, though this has not been used to take action to improve the rate of progress. The curriculum is satisfactory overall.

Activities are suitably practical and cover all areas of learning. However, the usable space in the Reception base is restricted as it is a thoroughfare between other rooms. This limits the effectiveness of some ongoing learning activities. The school recognises these limitations, and the plans to improve the accommodation and to provide ready access to a secure outdoor area are well in hand. In line with its caring ethos, the school has very effective procedures for welcoming children into Reception and so they settle quickly into school life.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the rate of children's progress 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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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?	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	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

18 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Veronica's Roman Catholic Primary School, Helmshore, Lancashire, BB4 4EZ

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to the school council and seeing you in lessons.

I agree with you and your parents that St Veronica's is a good school. Indeed some things about it are outstanding. The school takes excellent care of you all and gives you very good support and help when you need it. You play your part very well. You work hard, try your best and take a pride in what you do. This prepares you very well for the future. I was particularly impressed to hear about the 'Buddy System' in which the older ones help the children in Reception. This helps them to settle quickly into school. You also raise a lot of money to help others at home and abroad. Well done!

Teaching is good and in lessons the teachers explain new work clearly, so that you know what to do and get on quickly. They mark your work thoroughly and make good suggestions to help you improve. This helps you to make good progress in school, so that your standards in English, mathematics and science are generally above average by the time you leave Year 6.

To make your school even better, it is going to look at the way the Reception class is organised so that the young children can get the best out of all the activities on offer. I know the school already has plans to do this.

Good luck for the future and I hope you always keep such a good attitude to learning.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Shirley Herring

Lead Inspector