

English Martyrs Catholic Primary School, Preston

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119605
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313354
Inspection dates	25–26 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Jennie Platt

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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Simon Gillespie
Headteacher	Mr Adrian Dunn
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2004
School address	Sizer Street Preston Lancashire PR1 7DR
Telephone number	01772 556092
Fax number	01772 201291

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average size school which serves a socially and economically disadvantaged area. An above average number of pupils is eligible for a free school meal. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is similar to the national picture, but an above average number of these pupils have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school provides 'wrap around' lunchtime care for children attending the Nursery and after school care for other pupils.

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. It has an excellent partnership with other agencies, parents and the community that effectively promotes learning. Parents hold the school in high esteem. They are very pleased that their children attend a happy school which gives good attention to both academic education and the welfare of their children. Many parents wrote to the inspectors expressing their appreciation of all the school offers. One parent sums their appreciation up as: 'this is a friendly and welcoming atmosphere; all staff are welcoming and very approachable so any concerns are quickly dealt with and my child is happy'.

Personal development is good. Pupils enjoy school and, within a caring atmosphere, they grow in self-esteem showing a willingness to play a full role in the school community. Older pupils help the younger ones and all relate well to each other. Pupils raise an amazing amount of money for charities and support children in Africa with gifts and letters. Behaviour is good. Pupils look forward to 'Golden Time' which rewards their endeavours. The school has achieved a healthy eating award and an Activemark showing an understanding about healthy living. This is evident in pupils' choices for 'Golden Time' that often includes games and physical activities. Pupils appreciate the kindness they receive from all staff and this helps them to feel safe. This good attention given to pupils' welfare enables pupils to benefit from lessons.

Teaching is good and leads to good achievement. Lessons are interesting and include a variety of practical activities that sustain pupils' interest. Books are marked regularly, but comments do not always tell pupils how to improve. As yet, pupils are not fully involved in assessing their own learning. When they start school in the Nursery, the skills of many children are well below that which is typical of their age. They make good progress throughout the school and by the time they leave Year 6, they reach standards that are close to those expected of 11-year-olds. The schools' results of assessments at the end of Year 2 and of tests at the end of Year 6 show that standards are rising. Writing remains a weakness throughout the school and, although improving in some classes, standards are often below the level expected. The good curriculum contributes well to pupils' good progress because it focuses well on extending their experiences and develops a desire to increase knowledge and skills. On offer are some exciting opportunities such as the guitar lessons for the whole class.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher manages the school well keeping a good balance between the drive to raise standards and the focus on personal development. Good attention is given to the professional development of staff. This has been effective especially in increasing the skills of the teaching assistants. This has a positive impact on the excellent inclusion in all activities for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who have English as an additional language. Self-evaluation is collaborative and includes the views of governors and parents. As a result, the school has an accurate understanding of what is working well and what needs attention and so has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and make good progress. Provision for these children is well managed with close links between staff and detailed assessment leading to good achievement. Careful introduction, warm relationships and well organised routines mean children are happy and settle well. Parents are fully included and attend workshops and help

with reading. Teaching is good and based on practical activities and a clear understanding of how young children learn. An imaginative curriculum covers a wide range of learning experiences both indoors and out. Role play is imaginative although some resources in the house are old and not representative of current appliances. Children enjoy school and have a secure foundation of basic skills and a good approach to learning and these attributes serve them well as they move on to Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing throughout the school.
- Improve marking and the involvement of pupils in assessing their own work so that they have a clearer understanding of how to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Although they make good progress, many children in the Foundation Stage do not reach standards expected for their age in their personal, communication and numeracy skills. Standards in creative and physical development are close to the expected level.

In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils continue to make good progress and reach average standards by the time they leave in Year 6. The school's results show that standards are rising: at the end of Year 2 in 2006 the results showed an improvement over previous years. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2007, show that these standards are being maintained. Results of national tests show a steady improvement in Key Stage 2 and standards are broadly average. The proportion of pupils exceeding the level expected for their age is increasing. The school's data show that pupils in the current Year 6 are working at the level expected for their age and are well placed to meet the school's challenging targets. Standards in writing vary between years, but overall are lower than expected.

Additional support for pupils with learning difficulties is very well organised within and outside the classroom. Pupils have access to the same work as their peers and make good progress with examples of outstanding progress of some pupils leaving school with above average levels. Newcomers with English as an additional language benefit from bilingual support and also make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

In this friendly school, pupils make good progress in their personal development. They learn to understand their own feelings well and respect those of others. Relationships in the school are good and pupils are extremely polite, friendly and courteous. Pupils enjoy school. Their good behaviour and good attitudes to work create a productive, learning environment. Attendance is in line with the national average. Pupils have a good understanding about their role in a community. The opinions of the school council are valued and acted upon such as the new cloakrooms. Pupils show initiative in lessons because teachers provide many opportunities for them to contribute and develop confidence. They successfully adopt safe and healthy lifestyles and know the benefits of regular physical activity and healthy eating. Learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They abide by the class promises which include using good manners and being fair. The different cultures in school are celebrated and pupils share their different beliefs and traditions so that pupils are fully aware of living in a

multicultural society. The pupils' good grounding in social and basic skills prepares them well for the next stages of learning and life in their community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and the major reason for pupils' good achievement. This includes pupils of all ability because teachers correctly match work to pupils' ability. Teaching assistants play an excellent role in supporting pupils because they are well informed about their role in class. Lessons include a variety of activities and, as confirmed by pupils, lessons are enjoyable. In Year 6, pupils were engrossed in Macbeth because of the dramatic reading of the text. One pupil, eager to get paper to write on, said, 'This is really good.' Staff have very good relationships with their pupils. They respect their views and this encourages pupils to put ideas forward. Expectations are usually high, but in writing presentation could be improved and in books comments do not always tell pupils how to make their work better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a good range of learning experiences that meet the needs of all pupils well. Equality of opportunity is excellent because of the very close links with support agencies and the high number of trained teaching assistants in every class enabling pupils to learn in small groups. Good use is made of learners' literacy and numeracy skills across other subjects, but opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT) skills in this way are restricted because of a lack of resources in classrooms. Provision to promote personal development is good. Practical activities and discussions develop an understanding of keeping safe and healthy. The school is very aware of the limited experiences of many pupils and provided many visits and visitors that inspire new interests and make learning more enjoyable. Similarly, the emphasis on developing creativity and linking several subjects together makes learning relevant and fun. A good range of clubs also enriches the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of its pupils. Pupils trust staff and know who to turn to if they are troubled. They say, for example, 'there is always someone to help if I feel sad'. Arrangements for entry to school and to prepare pupils for transfer to secondary school are effective. Parents and carers feel very welcome in the school and are fully involved in their children's education. Child protection and health and safety procedures meet requirements. Therapists, specialist teachers and bilingual staff work very closely and effectively with staff to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language are supported well. Good tracking systems are in place so that the school can monitor pupils' progress from starting school to leaving. The use of assessment information is more established in Key Stage 2 and, as a result, the school is seeing a rise in standards because additional support is provided where it is most needed. This good practice is being spread to Key Stage 1.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides strong leadership. He uses his good knowledge of the needs of parents, staff and pupils to gain a clear direction for the school. All feel involved leading to a happy school with all pulling in the same direction: this has enabled the school to make good progress since the previous inspection.

Monitoring of teaching is effective and helps staff to capitalise on their skills and make further improvements. Improved tracking provides better information about individual pupils and targets are including an extra 'top up' to make them challenging. This extra challenge is leading to an increase in the rate of progress because it is effectively guiding support to where it is most needed.

Views of all are sought and considered as part of the school's self-evaluation. As a result, the school has an accurate picture what is happening and how to improve. This leads to the correct priorities in the school's plan for improvement. Actions to tackle these priorities are good, but it is not always clear how success is to be measured. Governance is good. Close links with subject leaders mean governors know what is happening in school. Financial management is good. Money targeted to training all staff and improving their skills in supporting learning makes a very positive contribution to the school's outstanding provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Value for money is good.

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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?	1
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	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	2
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	2
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

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	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

27 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of English Martyrs Catholic Primary School, Lancashire,

PR1 7DR

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. We appreciated your help and the way you shared with us your views of the school. You and your parents are correct in saying that yours is a good school. It has a warm and friendly atmosphere. You contribute to this by your good behaviour and the way you help each other. The older pupils are especially kind to the younger ones and help them if they have a problem. You very kindly support children in Africa who we are sure appreciate your help. We are especially pleased you care about keeping healthy and know how to look after yourselves. It was good to see you enjoying lessons and achieving well. We agree with you that teaching is good. You have some wonderful opportunities to learn new and exciting things on your many visits. We rarely see a whole class learning to play the guitar and hope you will be able to continue with this activity. The links with your parents are very good and this helps you to improve your learning.

These are some of the things we have asked the school to do:

- help you to improve your writing
- give you more information about how to make your work better.

We are sure you can help your teachers by trying to write neatly and listening carefully to their advice.

We hope the building work will soon be completed so that your staff can move into their new staffroom. They deserve it! We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs J E Platt and Mr G Alston

Inspectors