

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Claughton-on-Brock

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119619
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313360
Inspection date	27 June 2008
Reporting inspector	John Heap

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	32
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Philip Rydeard
Headteacher	Mrs Virginia Hart (Acting Head)
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2005
School address	Smithy Lane Claughton-on-Brock Preston Lancashire PR3 0PN
Telephone number	01995 640258
Fax number	01995 643475

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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: whether standards and achievement are high enough in reading and writing in Key Stage 1, particularly for the more able pupils; how well pupils are challenged by target-setting and marking; whether the success criteria in the school improvement plan are sharp enough to provide impetus for improving standards and progress. The inspector gathered evidence from school documentation; national data; interviews with pupils, staff and governors; observing lessons and other activities; and analysing parents' questionnaires and comments. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated 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 small primary school serves a wholly White British population. The area has few signs of social and economic disadvantage and the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below the national picture. In recent times, the school has encountered some disruption caused by staff illness and absences. The school has successfully achieved a range of awards including: Healthy School; Activemark; Investors in People and Basic Skills Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspection findings confirm the school's view that it is good and provides good value for money. Pupils and parents are highly appreciative of all that the school does and a typical parental view is: 'I am very happy with my daughter's progress. I have no worries about the school.'

Pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Key reasons for this are the high quality care and the excellent activities that promote personal development within the curriculum. Moral and social development is exceptionally strong and results in first-rate behaviour and attitudes to school work. Moreover, pupils thoroughly enjoy school and a good indicator of this is the above average attendance. Pupils have a very strong and improving knowledge and understanding of the diverse nature of society through the highly illuminating work they do about other faiths and countries, such as the Gambia. Pupils make an exceptionally strong contribution to the day-to-day running of the school through the work of prefects, and through 'PALS', when older children befriend younger children. The pupils' forum is extremely active in fund raising for charities and in providing a very effective voice for all pupils. They say that their biggest impact has been in helping to improve the outdoor play facilities to their excellent standard. However, they have also played a significant role in ensuring that pupils have an exceptional appreciation of what constitutes healthy and safe lifestyles. Pupils say they feel very secure in the school.

Pupils' achievement is good. Given the very small numbers of pupils in each year group, it is really important to be cautious about the results of any single year group. However, in general the trends in results are upward and are usually above average at the end of Year 6. This is good progress from the typical levels of attainment when they enter the Foundation Stage. National data show that pupils make the strongest progress in Key Stage 2 and the figures usually place the school in the top 25% nationally. In Key Stage 1, pupils could make more progress in reading, particularly the most able. This is because the books they are reading are not challenging enough. Writing standards are improving across the school because the quality of marking is good and provides pupils with a clear idea of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further. There are also increasing opportunities to write in other subjects. Since the previous inspection, there have been good improvements in the provision and standards in speaking and information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils have lots of opportunities to speak, for example, in a variety of lessons, pupils' forum meetings, eco schools committee and drama group. Given that attitudes to work and school are excellent and academic progress is good, pupils are well prepared for the future. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities mostly make good progress. Just occasionally, a pupil in need of extra support is identified late and therefore does not get the extra support early enough, or a modified programme of work.

Teaching and learning are good and promote good progress. Lessons are well planned, have clear objectives and there is a focus on pupils achieving personal targets. Pupils appreciate the target cards and the good quality of the marking which they say helps them learn and provides challenge. Relationships are good and pupils readily seek help and guidance when they need it. Teaching assistants provide good support for identified pupils. The good curriculum meets statutory requirements and there is a very wide range of enrichment activities that includes visits, visitors and activities outside lessons.

The good leadership and management have ensured that this is a caring and happy school, which has a good reputation in the local area. This has been built up over time and is evidence of a clear vision. The school management has done well, in trying circumstances, to maintain good academic achievement and provision. Statutory requirements are met, including those for safeguarding pupils and child protection. Robust procedures and practices for monitoring areas such as behaviour and attendance ensure that high standards are the norm. The good governance plays a significant role in monitoring and evaluation and has proved to be a stabilising and supportive force for the school. The satisfactory school improvement planning identifies appropriate priorities, but the measures of success are more to do with provision, rather than outcomes for pupils. The school recognises this and is beginning to make the appropriate adjustments.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Effective provision promotes children's good progress. Children enter Reception with a range of skills and abilities that, overall, are typical for their age. By the end of Reception, most children meet the expectation for their age and they often achieve better than this. Strong leadership and management foster the good use of assessment information to chart children's achievement and aid practitioners' planning. As a result, teaching is good and the classroom and outdoors are organised well. This means children use all their senses and skills to learn through organised play and direct work with adults. Personal and social skills are developed well and children quickly grow in independence by making choices about what activity they wish to do, tidying away resources and collaborating with others. Staff interact well with children, get involved with their activities and encourage them to develop their language skills, often through searching questions. A good example was seen when the children were putting each other in an order according to their shoe size, biggest to smallest. Finally they were asked where a certain individual should be placed in the order. Staff also provide firm guidance that sets a standard, for instance, 'Let's do things properly'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rate of progress in reading in Key Stage 1, particularly for the most able.
- Ensure that all pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified at the earliest 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?	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?	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	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

30 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Claughton-on-Brock,

PR3 OPN

I really enjoyed being in your school last week. I am most grateful for your warm welcome, courtesy and the help you provided. You go to a good school. In a brief letter it is difficult to write about all the good things in your school.

Here are some of the things I particularly liked about your school:

- the children in Reception class make good progress in their learning, work together well and respond to challenging questions
- you enjoy school and your parents appreciate this
- you make a really big contribution to the day-to-day work of the school, generously collecting for charity and helping to make decisions that improve the school
- because your moral and social development is so very strong, you behave exceptionally well, relate well to others and attendance is better than many schools in the country
- you make good progress as you move through the school
- there is a very good range of activities that enrich the curriculum and make school much more interesting
- good leadership and management ensure that you are really well cared for and the leaders are always seeking to improve things for you.

To improve further, your school needs to ensure that pupils in Key Stage 1 have more challenging books to read, particularly those who are really good readers, to help them make even more progress. It also needs to make sure that those who find learning a bit more difficult than most get help more quickly. I know that you will want to help by continuing to always do your best work, follow the advice from your teachers and seek out books that will make you think.

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

Yours sincerely

John Heap

Lead inspector