

St James-the-Less Roman Catholic Primary School, Rawtenstall

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119665
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313381
Inspection date	4 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Lynne Read

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	174
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Father David Lupton
Headteacher	Mr John Alan Mooney
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2003
School address	Unity Way Rawtenstall Rossendale Lancashire BB4 8SU
Telephone number	01706 216190
Fax number	01706 831552

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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: achievement and standards, teaching and learning, personal development and well-being, the curriculum, care, guidance and support and leadership and management; gathering evidence from lesson observations, assessment data, documents, parents' replies to the questionnaire 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 an average sized primary school. Pupils come from a range of backgrounds; the proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is below average. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. When they enter the Reception class, children's development is broadly typical for the age group. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average overall with an above average percentage holding a statement of special educational needs.

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. There are some outstanding features which include pupils' personal development and the quality of care, guidance and support provided for them. The school provides good value for money. The inspection judgements match the school's own evaluation of its performance, confirming the effectiveness of its monitoring and self-evaluation procedures. The vast majority of parents have very positive views of the school. Comments include praise for 'the strong academic, social and spiritual foundation that the school provides' and 'the priority given to children's welfare'.

Standards are above average and pupils achieve well. On entry to Year 1, pupils' attainment is higher than is expected for this age in most areas of learning. They make good progress through Key Stage 1 and standards in the Year 2 teacher assessments are consistently above average. By the time pupils leave Year 6, standards are generally well above average. A slight dip in 2007 was due partly to the fact that a high percentage of pupils entered or left the year group so not all had the benefit of the school's good provision across the junior years. The other factor was that in mathematics fewer pupils exceeded the level expected for their age than anticipated and did not meet the school's targets. Staff have acted swiftly on this issue, making adjustments in the curriculum, teaching and tracking of pupils' progress. Teachers are making lessons more challenging. This challenge needs extending to all pupils in order to ensure the school's ambitious targets are met. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities have good, sensitive support and achieve well from their starting points. Teachers have recently been successful in improving boys' writing so they achieve as well as the girls.

Pupils learn well because they are taught well. Pupils' work is assessed very regularly and tasks are well planned to cater for pupils' differing abilities. The more able often have problem-solving, research or investigative work to apply and stretch their skills and talents. Where pupils' progress is not meeting the teacher's expectations, special catch-up or booster programmes are introduced and this is another factor underpinning good progress at the school. Well trained teaching assistants guide and encourage pupils, thus enabling them to succeed. Teachers give good guidance for pupils through helpful comments in marking and targets which clearly indicate what needs improving. New systems are encouraging pupils to evaluate their own progress and develop their own goals. This was seen to work very well in some writing lessons where pupils were using their 'marking ladders' effectively. Staff are now looking to develop these systems further in order to allow pupils to take even more responsibility for their own learning.

The good curriculum is another important factor underpinning good progress. It provides ample opportunities for pupils to apply what they learn in their literacy, numeracy and computer lessons. The curriculum provides a good balance in developing pupils' creative, practical and personal talents, as well as their academic skills. The provision for children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very good. The school goes to great lengths to secure expertise or resources needed to meet their specific needs. There is good enhancement for learning through visits and expert visitors, both of which inject excitement into the curriculum. The school creates outstanding partnerships, including valuable links with local schools and outside specialists, which support pupils' development extremely well. Some of the benefits are additional lessons in modern foreign languages, opportunities for pupils to meet with people from a variety of backgrounds and expert tuition in physical and creative activities.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Attendance is above average and punctuality is good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding; supported very well by the school's Catholic ethos, very strong links with the church and an excellent programme of personal, health, social and citizenship education. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and behave extremely well. Older pupils demonstrate very good self-discipline and an excellent work ethic. Throughout school, pupils are happy and confident learners because they have outstanding relationships with their teachers. Meticulous attention is given to care and support. Safeguarding procedures are in place. As a result, pupils feel secure and say that adults in school are always on hand to 'listen to problems and help us'. The National Healthy Schools Award recognises the excellent work done in teaching pupils about healthy living and generating enthusiasm for sport and exercise. Pupils have excellent involvement in both the church and school communities which help to prepare them very well as future citizens. For example, they frequently lead church services and carry out a wide range of responsibilities within school, such as being play-leaders or class monitors. These features, together with a very good level of basic skills ensure that pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their future lives. The elected school council ensures that pupils' views are known and taken into account.

Leadership and management are good. Managers continually identify areas for improvement and develop the relevant plans for action. Because of this effective system, the school has a record of good improvements since the previous inspection and has good capacity to maintain its strengths and improve further. Senior managers set a high priority on monitoring achievement and provision, setting challenging targets and making improvements where needed. Subject managers are now becoming increasingly involved in this process. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and is constantly driving the school forwards. He has the confidence and respect of staff, governors, parents and pupils. All staff work as a strong team, providing good continuity of approach and a commitment to providing the best they can for pupils. Governors understand the strengths of the school thoroughly and have a secure overview of standards and achievement. They bring a very good range of expertise and experience to enhance management and are active in the daily life of the school. Governance is good and all statutory requirements are met.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children join the school with a very broad range of skills. Overall, their development is typical for the age group. Good introduction arrangements ensure that children settle quickly. They make good progress in the Reception class, developing a broad foundation for their future education. This is because the staff carefully plan the next steps for each individual to build carefully on what has already been learnt. Behaviour is good and children are well versed in class routines. They thoroughly enjoy their work and collaborate well. Children enjoy a wide range of teacher-led tasks, including physical challenges. Independent learning is supported well through an interesting selection of free choice activities. Recent building development has prevented children having continuous access to their outdoor learning area. Now the buildings are finished plans are in place to improve matters.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve attainment at the higher level in mathematics to ensure that the school's challenging targets are met.

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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	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	1

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

5 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James-the-Less Roman Catholic Primary School, Rawtenstall, Lancashire, BB4 8SU

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school. I thoroughly enjoyed my day and I appreciated all the help you gave me and the interesting conversations we had. In return, I would like to tell you what I found out.

St James-the-Less is a good school. Some of the main things that impressed me were your excellent behaviour, your willingness to persevere and work hard, and your friendliness. You get on very well together and take very good care of each other. You are a credit to your families and your school. Your council members ensure that your views and opinions are known. They are resourceful and good at convincing people to help. The money being donated by the Parents' Association will provide a good start in the fundraising for your new playground benches. I also think you do an excellent job in raising money for charities, which shows that you care about those who are less fortunate in the world.

The school is a safe and happy place. It is good to know that bullying is 'very, very rare' and that adults 'always listen to you'. I agree with the person who described the school as 'really good' and the one who said teachers provide 'lots of opportunities to do different things'. Please thank your parents for sending lots of replies to the questionnaire. They are very pleased with the school, especially the good progress you make, the good teaching and the excellent care provided.

You are keen to learn and are making good progress. Well done, keep up the good work. Your teachers have made some new plans for your work in mathematics to make your progress even better in that subject. I know how much you like a challenge so I am sure you will try hard and enjoy good success in your new lessons.

Thank you once again for the interesting conversations I had and for letting me share your day. There is a great deal about your school of which you and the staff can be proud. Please accept my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Lynne Read

Lead inspector