

St Edward's Roman Catholic Primary School Blackburn

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119666
Local Authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	313382
Inspection dates	22–23 May 2008
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	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Leatham
Headteacher	Mrs Alyson Grundy
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2003
School address	Blackburn Road Darwen Lancashire BB3 0AA
Telephone number	01254 701616
Fax number	01254 761805

Age group	4-11
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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 mixed area of privately owned and social housing and indications of deprivation are broadly average. The number on roll is falling as fewer pupils can be admitted to each year group following a recent reduction in admission numbers. The vast majority of pupils are from a White British background. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has good links with the parish, professional agencies and other local schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with some good features. Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils enjoy school and the good range of after-school activities, and their attendance is above average. They have confidence in their teachers and feel safe. Pupils benefit from healthy menus and snacks and take the many opportunities offered for exercise. They make a good contribution to the school community by undertaking many duties, for example, young pupils in Year 1 act as 'weather checkers'. Pupils are adequately prepared for adult life by working cooperatively together, though inconsistent progress in developing basic skills hampers some pupils' progress.

Pupils make satisfactory progress. They enter the school with skills that are generally below what could be expected for their age. They make good progress and achieve well in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 because teaching is good. By the end of Year 2 standards are above average, though the number of pupils reaching higher than expected levels is broadly average. In the 2007 national tests for Year 6, standards were below average, particularly in mathematics. The number of pupils attaining the higher level was significantly below average. School assessment records clearly show that this lack of progress took place in lower Key Stage 2 and the school has now taken effective action to correct weaknesses in teaching and tackle underachievement. Recent assessments of pupils' achievement show that the large majority of pupils now nearing the end of Year 6 are working at the expected level in English and mathematics. Standards are broadly average and are close to the school's targets. However, there has been insufficient challenge for the more able pupils so they do not achieve as well as they can.

The school places great emphasis on caring for its pupils. Care and support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is of high quality and so they make good progress in developing their physical, social and academic skills. Clear school rules are consistently applied to guide pupils' personal development. However, pupils are not always given sufficient guidance individually about what they need to do to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The school is successful in promoting a good standard of care and personal development but took too long to identify and deal with the weaknesses in teaching in lower Key Stage 2. The governors are an active presence in school and governance is sound. The building programme has successfully addressed the shortcomings in accommodation identified in the last inspection but some lack of achievement has stalled an improvement in standards. The improvements in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and the more recent reversal of declining standards in Key Stage 2 indicate that the school has a sound capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision for children in the well managed Foundation Stage is good. Children enter the school with a range of skills that vary from year to year but are generally lower than is usual for their age. They make good progress in the Reception class and the majority reach the expected goals by the time they enter Year 1. Teaching is consistently good. Lessons are lively and interesting so that children develop an enjoyment in learning from an early age. Children's progress is assessed regularly and the information is used well to plan work that fits the needs of different

groups. The curriculum is good. Varied activities are suitably practical and show a good understanding of how young children learn. The school has good procedures for introducing children to school and helping them to settle quickly.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make rigorous use of available information to identify and tackle any underachievement promptly.
- Raise standards in Key Stage 2 by giving clearer guidance to individual pupils to help them to improve.
- Provide greater challenge in lessons in Years 1 to 6 for more able pupils so that they make swifter progress.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory, though progress is inconsistent across the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because of the good level of support they receive.

Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 because teaching is good. The 2007 national assessments in Year 2 showed above average overall standards although relatively fewer pupils reached above average levels of attainment. Latest assessment information indicates that these standards have been maintained for the current year.

In the 2007 national tests in Year 6, standards were below average particularly in mathematics. School records clearly show that this lack of progress took place in lower Key Stage 2 because of inconsistencies in teaching and this weakness was not adequately addressed at the time. Following the disappointing results in 2007 the school took swift action and a reorganisation of staffing has resulted in improvements in teaching and more effective learning in lower Key Stage 2. The focus on developing pupils' calculation skills and the good level of individual support in class has led to an improvement in the current year. The most recent teacher assessments in Year 6 show that standards are broadly in line with national expectations. However, in concentrating on developing basic skills to the expected level, there has been insufficient challenge for more able pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Informed by the school's Catholic tradition and a good programme for personal, social and health education, pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are polite, courteous and friendly and behave well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Pupils are well aware of the factors that contribute to a healthy lifestyle through healthy school lunches and regular opportunities for exercise. They enjoy coming to school and attendance is good. Pupils feel safe and are confident to talk to an adult should they have a problem. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and parish communities as class monitors, school councillors and peer pals. The school welcomes a range of visitors to school to widen pupils'

appreciation and understanding of cultural diversity. Pupils make adequate progress in developing skills for their future learning through the good range of opportunities to develop their social and collaborative skills. However, inconsistent progress in literacy and numeracy in Key Stage 2 has hampered the development of the basic skills of some groups.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Relationships are positive, school rules are consistently applied and so behaviour is good. Teaching is good in Key Stage 1 and pupils achieve well. Good planning and organisation, clear explanations and suitable, practical tasks lead to good learning in lessons.

Teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 2. Shortcomings in teaching in Years 3 and 4 over time are now being addressed and a reorganisation of staffing and an effective programme of staff training are bringing about improvements. Experienced and skilled teaching assistants provide very good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and make a good contribution to their learning. In some lessons however, there is insufficient challenge for more able pupils; often they are required to complete undemanding tasks before moving on to more suitable and challenging activities to accelerate their learning.

Teachers mark work regularly, and some give helpful suggestions about how pupils can improve. However, this is not consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. The strong programme for personal, social and health education promotes pupils' good personal development. There is a thriving range of well attended after-school clubs and activities that contribute well to a healthy lifestyle and pupils' enjoyment of school. Educational visits broaden pupils' horizons and enhance the curriculum.

There is a suitable emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy which is helping to improve pupils' basic skills, though there are few opportunities for higher attaining pupils to use these skills, for example, in solving problems. There is very good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and they make good progress.

Good use of information and communication technology enhances the curriculum. The recent initiative of providing some pupils with individual hand held computers is helping them to combine and develop skills from various areas of the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place and parents appreciate the support and care which the school provides. The breakfast club provides a good start to the day for many pupils and has helped to improve attendance and punctuality.

The experienced and skilled support staff are well led and deployed and provide high quality support for pupils who find aspects of school life difficult. Pupils' needs are identified at a very

early stage and specialist support from other professionals is provided where needed. Consequently, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress physically, socially and academically.

School rules are applied consistently and so pupils have a clear understanding of how to behave. However, individual pupils are not quite so clear on what they need to do to improve their work. The school has well established systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress though the information is not always used quickly enough to identify and remedy any underachievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school is successful in promoting high quality support, good care and good personal development for its pupils. However, actions to address underachievement in the lower Key Stage 2 over a period of time, clearly shown in the school's records, were not taken promptly enough, leading to a fall in standards. This is now being addressed through a reorganisation of staffing, in-service training and a concentration on developing basic calculation skills. Consequently, teaching and standards have improved in Key Stage 2. The school monitors its work regularly and is fairly accurate in its self-evaluation.

Inclusion is given high priority. The very good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well managed and so these pupils are making good progress.

Governors are actively involved in school and have a sound understanding of its work. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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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?	3
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	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Edward's Roman Catholic Primary School Blackburn, Blackburn with Darwen, BB3 0AA

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you in lessons and during the school council meeting. We were particularly impressed by your behaviour, your good attendance and the way so many of you join in the wide range of school activities. We really enjoyed Year 1's assembly about farm animals. I wish we could have seen the 'Extravaganza'.

Yours is a satisfactory school. There are many good things about it but some things could be even better. We agree with you and your parents that the school takes good care of you. There is always an adult in class to give you extra help when you need it and help you get on.

You are making satisfactory progress in your work but some of you could do even better, particularly in Key Stage 2. Your teachers give you clear explanations to help you understand what to do, but I think those of you who can work more quickly could try more challenging work.

The staff are going to do these things to improve your learning:

- help those of you in Key Stage 2 to do better in your work
- help those who are capable to reach a higher standard
- look more closely at how well you are learning to identify what you need to learn next
- make sure that each of you knows what you need to do to improve in literacy and numeracy.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Shirley Herring

Lead inspector