

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Chorley

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119672
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313383
Inspection dates	5–6 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Jennifer Taylor

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	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Rogerson
Headteacher	Mrs Claire Griffin (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2003
School address	Hornchurch Drive Chorley Lancashire PR7 2RJ
Telephone number	01257 262811
Fax number	01257 268263

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mary's Catholic school is of average size and serves a mainly White British population. A few pupils are from other cultures or faiths. All pupils have English as their first language.

Approximately a quarter of pupils travel from outlying areas. Very few pupils are eligible to receive a free school meal. There is a below average number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has received several awards including Healthy School, Basic Skills Quality Mark 2 and Investors in People.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Mary's is a good school with some outstanding features. Most children start school with skills that are typical for their age. Pupils make good progress and by the time they are 11 they are confident, articulate and caring young people. Pupils reach standards that are above average in national tests and do particularly well in English. The higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well in mathematics as they do in English.

Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers use questioning particularly well to challenge and motivate pupils, although the level of challenge provided for higher attaining pupils in mathematics does not enable them to achieve the higher levels in national tests. A recently introduced assessment programme is beginning to provide the information needed to raise standards. There is skilful and effective support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and they make good progress. This is a caring school and sensitive situations are handled very well. Procedures to safeguard pupils are in place.

The personal development of all pupils is outstanding and their behaviour is excellent. Attendance is good and pupils enjoy coming to school. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy because of the wide range of physical activities and healthy diet provided by the school. They know how to keep safe and to make sure others are safe too. The older pupils who act as PALS in the playground set very good examples to the younger children in how to play safely and care for one another. Pupils raise funds for charities including the local children's hospice. They have close association with the local community through the connection with the church and other organisations. Pupils' good standards in English, mathematics and science and their confident use of information and communication technology (ICT) prepare them very well for the next phase in their education. The curriculum is rich and many opportunities are afforded to the pupils to learn about other faiths and cultures and to develop skills in the creative arts.

Leadership and management are good. The acting headteacher is well supported by the governing body and the senior management team. She has embraced previous innovations and continued to encourage their development. All the staff care deeply for the education and well-being of their pupils. Parents are supportive of the school and, when they can, take part in activities provided for them. The school has made good improvement since the last inspection. Self-evaluation is good and the school has accurately identified areas for future development. Therefore, it has good capacity to improve further. Careful financial management ensures that the school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage is good. Children make good progress from when they enter the Foundation Stage with skills that are typical for their age. They transfer to Year 1 having exceeded the level expected of them. Children enjoy the range of learning experiences provided for them and work hard. They are kept safe and healthy. They enjoy snacks of milk and fruit and this time is used productively to promote social and communication skills. Parents and grandparents are encouraged to become involved in their children's education. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Detailed records are maintained to monitor the progress of all children. Action is taken to identify individual areas for development and support

is put in place to enable all children to make good progress. Future priorities are to encourage speaking and listening skills, as well as pupils' personal development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. All pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and are helped to achieve as well as they can. By the time pupils enter Key Stage 1, they have exceeded the agreed learning goals for this age group. Good progress is maintained and, by the ages of 7 and 11, results in national tests and assessments show standards are above average with English being the strongest subject. The most recent results of national tests show that the proportion of Year 6 pupils gaining the higher level in English was above the 2006 national average. Results in mathematics were also above average but fewer pupils attained the higher level. The school meets its challenging targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their spiritual development is also outstanding, reflecting the school's strong commitment to Christian principles as personified in the mission statement to 'promote each child's innate capacity for spiritual growth'. Multicultural development is outstanding. Visits by other faith leaders enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding. Local culture is celebrated through involvement in activities such as clog dancing. Pupils have a clear awareness of right and wrong. Behaviour and attitudes in lessons are outstanding. Exclusions are very rare. Pupils enjoy coming to school where they learn well and make good progress. Good attendance is encouraged and rewarded, and attendance rates are consistently above average. The school makes a good contribution to the local community, for example, through the choir. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle. They feel safe in school. Pupil playground leaders are popular and wear their red caps with pride. Pupils are very generous in their charity giving. Their good academic and personal skills augur well for when they move on to the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding so that all pupils make good progress. Teachers adapt their teaching styles and make the tasks they provide interesting and match them to the needs and abilities of all pupils. Teachers are confident and knowledgeable. This is reflected in the appropriate use of technical vocabulary which engages pupils' interest. Teachers are particularly adept at posing searching questions to stimulate and motivate pupils. As a result, pupils work hard and behave very well. Teaching assistants are skilful and play an active part within the teaching team. They are well deployed and provide high quality support. Classes are well managed and little time is wasted. Pupils work well together. They are encouraged to become increasingly independent as they mature. The recent introduction of an assessment programme has been effective and is beginning to raise standards. It also helps teachers to

establish realistic targets for most pupils, although those set for more able pupils in mathematics do not challenge them sufficiently. Marking is consistently good throughout the school. It is informative and guides pupils' learning well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs. Provision is good for the gifted and talented pupils and those with learning and/or behavioural and emotional difficulties and they make good progress. All statutory requirements are met. Provision in ICT has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. The strong focus on personal development has a positive effect on the ethos for learning in the school. The range of extra-curricular activities, and pupils' participation in them, is good particularly in sport. Links with the partner high schools are strong, especially for physical education, mathematics and science. Visitors, such as story tellers, make a valuable contribution to the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good systems are in place to ensure the welfare of all pupils. Risk assessments are rigorously carried out, often with the involvement of pupils, for example, to check on safety during residential visits. Procedures are in place to safeguard children and the requirements of current legislation are fully met. All adults are provided with up-to-date training in child protection. Good links with other agencies ensure pupils receive appropriate support. The breakfast club and after school club are popular with pupils and well attended. Pupils feel safe in school and have confidence in their teachers and other adults. Academic guidance is good. Tracking systems ensure that pupils are generally set challenging targets and receive good advice on what it is they need to do to improve their work and move up a level.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Staff and governors have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and have correctly identified areas for future development. They have focused on raising standards and achievement in all areas of the curriculum but particularly in English, mathematics and science. The acting headteacher has continued to encourage innovation to enable subject managers to gain a clear picture of what is happening in the subjects they lead. Systematic assessment and analysis have generally helped teachers to set realistic and achievable targets which the pupils fully understand. The quality of teaching and learning is rigorously monitored with the result that all staff are aware of the need to raise standards of the most able pupils in mathematics. Teachers and support staff work closely as a team to ensure all pupils have the same opportunities to learn. There are strong links with local schools to exchange expertise and resources. Resources are used well. Financial management ensures the school provides good value for money. The issues identified at the previous inspection have been addressed. A large majority of parents are supportive of the school. Governance is good and statutory requirements 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?	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	2
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	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	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

7 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Chorley, Lancashire,

PR7 2RJ

Thank you very much for talking to me about your work and sharing with me all the things you enjoy doing at school. It was a pleasure to spend two days with such polite and extremely well behaved pupils. You attend a good school. I enjoyed seeing how well you care for one another, especially how the older pupils played with the younger children in the playground. You all work hard and do very well but more of the pupils could reach even higher levels in mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2. The school knows this and is going to help you do even better next year.

I am sure you will all continue to enjoy your school and offer a warm welcome to your new headteacher in January.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Taylor

Lead Inspector