

St Dunstans RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105526
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	324235
Inspection dates	23–24 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Lynne Read

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	227
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev D Featherstone
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Morris
Date of previous school inspection	27 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Bacup Street Moston Manchester M40 9HF
Telephone number	0161 6815665
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized primary school serves the local parish and is situated in an area of social disadvantage, around three miles from the centre of Manchester. The proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is currently average but this is lower than the usual pattern. Most pupils are of White British backgrounds. Around 30% have Irish, Asian, African or Caribbean heritage and 10% of the school population are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and the incidence of pupils entering or leaving the school part way through their education is higher than usual. The school offers a breakfast club for pupils, run by volunteers.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Dunstan's Roman Catholic Primary is a good school and provides good value for money. Parents have confidence in the school and praise the, 'good manners, social skills and advanced abilities of the children'. Good links with the church, other schools and agencies provide many benefits for pupils' personal and learning needs. For example, pupils lead mass for the community, both in school and church, and the Schools Sports Partnership provides added opportunities for physical activities.

By the end of Year 6 standards are just above average. From a below average starting point, achievement is good overall. However, progress in writing at Key Stage 1 is slower and is satisfactory. The school is checking progress in Years 1 and 2 more closely and teachers have increased their expectations of what pupils should achieve. As a result some pockets of good progress are now emerging but there is still more to do, especially in spelling and handwriting. In Key Stage 2, science, mathematics and reading are strengths. For this age group, there have been good improvements in writing.

Teaching is good overall but, for writing in Key Stage 1, it is satisfactory. Across school, lessons challenge pupils' thinking and problem solving skills, providing good opportunities for them to be active, enthusiastic learners. In Key Stage 2 work is well planned to support and promote success for all pupils. However, in Key Stage 1, expectations are not consistently high enough to ensure that pupils achieve their best in writing and marking does not clearly explain what they need to do to improve. The good curriculum is enhanced by a varied selection of visits, which inspires pupils and extends their experiences. Learning includes a strong emphasis on personal, social and health education. Pupils are proud of their Healthy Schools Gold Award that recognises the good work done to help them live safe and healthy lives.

Pupils' personal development, including their behaviour, is good. The school provides a friendly and harmonious environment and pupils say they enjoy learning. Several come early and take advantage of the breakfast club, which provides a good start to the day and is helping to improve punctuality. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community. For example, the school council is involved in decision making and the Eco committee has been busy with recycling and litter picking activities. The anti-bullying committee help to publicise and enforce the policy of zero tolerance to any form of intimidation or racism. Pupils leave the school as confident and mature individuals, with good personal and academic skills that prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

The headteacher provides good, determined leadership and has implemented many improvements that have raised standards. Managers have a thorough overview of provision in Key Stage 2 but the monitoring of teaching and learning is not as effective in ensuring that provision is consistently good across all subjects at Key Stage 1. Nevertheless, the good range of skills and expertise within the senior leadership team, together with good improvements made since the previous inspection, mean that there is good capacity for the school to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes benefit from good teaching and learning. Good quality care and support for children's well-being ensure that they have a smooth introduction to school life. The children enjoy their work: their behaviour and personal skills are good.

Children's development on entry to Nursery is below that expected and a significant proportion has difficulty with speaking and listening and personal skills. They benefit from full time education in the Nursery, which provides a good boost to early learning. In both classes, children's progress is assessed constantly and tasks are planned effectively to build on developing knowledge and skills. Planning also takes account of children's interests to keep them well motivated. For example, the 'Princesses and Pirates' theme inspired their work and led to much enjoyment. Staff are well led by the coordinator and work very effectively as a team. They provide an interesting curriculum that has a good element of child-chosen activities to develop independence. The extensive outside environment is used imaginatively to support all aspects of learning. Children make good progress and the majority are working at or around expected levels by the time they enter Year 1. A new programme for learning about sounds and letters is helping to promote early reading skills. Staff are now working on extending opportunities for early writing further, for example in the role-play areas, and developing children's imagination through a more varied selection of reading experiences.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the teaching of writing in Key Stage 1 to raise achievement and standards.
- Develop further the monitoring of provision in Key Stage 1 to ensure that teaching and learning are consistently good across all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good overall but the rate of progress varies between age groups. Standards are slightly higher than average by the end of Year 6. The results of the teacher assessments for Year 2 in 2008 were below average although these pupils made satisfactory progress from their starting points. Measures were introduced to help boost progress. New assessments and tracking records show pockets of good progress for the present Years 1 and 2, but the school recognises that there is still more to do in writing. For example, work often includes too many spelling mistakes and untidy handwriting.

Progress accelerates in Key Stage 2 and the school exceeds its challenging targets. Reading is a strength and the school has worked hard to improve writing. Current assessments and completed work show that skills in spelling, grammar and punctuation are now secure. Pupils are confident in planning, editing and refining their writing and they make imaginative use of language. These improvements have not, as yet, made an impact on test results. A recent focus on promoting boys' learning is proving successful so they are now making equal progress to the girls.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, new arrivals and those who are learning English as an additional language receive good support so they make equal progress to their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere in school. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They have good attitudes to their work, are keen to learn and behave well. Attendance is improved and is slightly below average. The school is doing all it can, in conjunction with outside agencies, to raise parents' awareness of the importance of regular attendance. However, there remains

a small group of persistent, poor attendees. Pupils have a good awareness of the need to stay safe, fit and healthy. The varied choice of school lunches and good range of sports and physical activities contribute well to this. Pupils say they feel safe and secure and that there is always someone to talk over any problems they have. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and very well supported through close links with the church. Pupils work and play well together, showing care and consideration for each other and their environment. They willingly take on responsibilities as prefects or junior wardens. There is good interaction with the local and wider community as pupils distribute harvest gifts and raise money for local and national charities. The range of experiences and responsibilities, together with good academic achievement, prepare pupils well for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching has a good impact on learning overall, but for writing in Key Stage 1, it is satisfactory. Across school, teachers make the purpose of learning clear so pupils know what is expected of them. Relationships in lessons are good so pupils develop good attitudes to learning and a willingness to persevere with tasks. Well informed and experienced teaching assistants provide good, sensitive support in helping pupils to succeed.

Teachers constantly assess progress and tasks are generally planned accurately at different levels of difficulty. This helps to accelerate progress for the more able and ensures good provision for pupils who need extra help. However, expectations of standards and presentation are often lower in Key Stage 1, especially in writing. In Key Stage 2 marking is good and often includes praise and useful comments to help pupils improve. It is not as effective in Key Stage 1. This means that pupils do not always have enough help in correcting mistakes, or they do not follow advice given so simple errors re-appear.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils' progress is effectively supported by a well planned and interesting curriculum, which is well matched to their needs. Links with the secondary school extend learning, for example, through the provision of French lessons. Subjects such as art, history and geography have been successfully linked into topics, which make learning more exciting for the pupils. Planning includes plentiful opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills across the curriculum, resulting in a positive impact on achievement. However, the school recognises the need to develop pupils' research skills further through the more extensive use of information and communication technology.

A wealth of additional experiences are provided through visits and expert visitors, which broaden pupils' horizons. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the many interesting trips planned for them, especially the residential experience for Year 6. A varied range of out of school clubs encourages them to develop their skills and talents. The science club is a particular favourite and pupils enjoy plentiful opportunities for exercise and sport.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This aspect is good and a typical parental comment is, staff create a 'happy environment'. Pupils' emotional development is especially well supported through the 'Calm Spaces' project. Staff ensure that pupils with additional needs have specialist resources or support so they can access lessons fully. Safeguarding meets all of the current requirements and child protection systems are well established. Safety inspections are carried out regularly and actions are taken to rectify the issues identified. Academic guidance is well established and tracking records provide a clear picture of pupils' progress. As a result, special teaching programmes are planned to provide a boost to learning, where needed. Individual learning targets for pupils show them what they need to do to improve and provide a long term goal to aim for. In Key Stage 2 pupils respond to the advice well and are becoming independent learners by evaluating their own progress. The system is developing in Key Stage 1.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and clearly focused on achieving high standards. The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and assistant headteachers, provides good leadership. She is held in high regard by the governors and is constantly driving the school forwards. Managers work hard to ensure that different groups of pupils such as boys and girls or those from different backgrounds, have full and equal access to all that the school offers. Subject managers contribute effectively to the school's accurate evaluation of its performance. They keep a close eye on achievement and standards and use the information collected to plan school development, thus ensuring that issues are addressed. In Key Stage 2 management systems provide a clear picture of teaching. In Key Stage 1, however, monitoring work is not rigorous or frequent enough to ensure consistently good practice. Governors have an efficient committee structure and a secure overview of standards and achievement. Members bring a good deal of expertise and experience to management. Governance is good and all statutory requirements are met. Involvement in local projects and combined school/church events promote a sense of citizenship among pupils and contribute effectively to community cohesion. A new policy has been introduced to further develop links with families of all the ethnic groups represented in school. There has been insufficient time for this to be reviewed or evaluated.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you very much for the warm, cheerful welcome and for all the help you gave my colleague and me when we came to visit your school. We had an interesting time in your company and would like to tell you what we found out.

St Dunstan's is a friendly school and it provides you with a good education. Your behaviour is good and you take really good care of each other. You enjoy your learning, try hard and are making good progress. You are a credit to your families and the school. Your teachers say that you are, 'wonderful children' and they enjoy working with you. What a lovely compliment! You say that you especially enjoy the wide variety of visits that your teachers organise. The fundraising you do shows that you are kind and considerate people and that you are mindful of others who are less fortunate.

Those of you in the Nursery and Reception classes learn well and have a lot of fun. In conversations, many of you in Key Stage 2 chose science and mathematics as your favourite lessons. It is not surprising then that these two subjects are the strongest in school and that, by the end of Year 6, you are achieving better standards than most pupils of your age in these subjects. Well done! In Key Stage 2 there are some pleasing improvements in writing this year with standards catching up to those in reading. In Key Stage 1 you try hard and are confident in reading and your mathematics work. I think, however, that you can do better in writing, especially by improving your spelling and handwriting. I have asked your teachers to help you do this and also to check that you are learning as well as you can across all subjects.

Thank you once again for the interesting conversations we had and for letting us know your views so clearly. Good luck for the future and I am sure you will continue to enjoy your happy school.