

St Thomas More Roman Catholic Primary School, Middleton, Rochdale

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105820
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	324277
Inspection date	4 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Jim Kidd

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)	309
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	Mr Tony Williams
Headteacher	Mr D McCorriston
Date of previous school inspection	20 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Evesham Road Alkrington Middleton Manchester M24 1PY
Telephone number	0161 6437132

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	4 June 2009
Inspection number	324277

Fax number

0161 6437132

Age group	3-11
Inspection date	4 June 2009
Inspection number	324277

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' achievement across the school, the curriculum, the impact of leadership and management at all levels and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Evidence was collected from the school's self-evaluation form, nationally published assessment data, the school's own assessment records, relevant policies, observations of the school at work including visits to lessons and analysis of parents' questionnaires. Discussions were also held with staff, the chair of governors and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence that the school's own assessments of these aspects, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This larger than average school serves an area which is mixed but generally advantaged in social and economic terms. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and there are no pupils who are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below that usually found. The deputy headteacher is currently acting as headteacher due to the substantive headteacher's absence through illness. St Thomas More Roman Catholic Primary has the Basic Skills Award and is an accredited Healthy School.

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 in which pupils' personal development and the care, guidance and support provided for them are outstanding. Moreover, the school has addressed well the issues for improvement from the previous inspection and the curriculum is now excellent. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of what the school does for their sons and daughters and comment, 'We are consistently impressed with the quality of education, pastoral care and the range of extra-curricular activities that the school provides. The staff are committed, approachable and professional.'

From broadly average age-related skills on entry to the school, pupils achieve well in all key stages and reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Standards in English are improving year-on-year, in reading, in particular. However, fewer pupils reach the higher National Curriculum Level 5 in writing. Pupils' attainment in other subjects, for example in art, drama, history, geography and physical education continues to be impressive and the school is justly proud of its prestigious Primary Geography Quality Mark award.

Pupils really enjoy their school and their attendance is well above average. As they say, 'If you miss school, you don't learn!' They behave impeccably both in lessons and at break and lunchtimes. They have a keen awareness of what makes a balanced diet and give visitors detailed advice on how to ensure the heart remains healthy by keeping physically active and by avoiding fatty foods. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall but pupils' awareness of cultures different to their own is less well developed. Pupils display profound moral and social understanding, often taking the lead in organising fundraising activities for a range of charities. The school council represents the views of its constituents with skill and verve and a significant number of pupils in Years 5 and 6 volunteer to be 'playground pals' to make sure that no one is lonely at break or lunchtime. Pupils' good academic achievement and excellent personal development ensure they are well prepared for the next stage in their education and beyond.

The good quality of teaching and learning is characterised by secure subject knowledge of staff, impressive use of information and communication technology in the classroom and an overriding emphasis on ensuring that pupils take responsibility for their own progress. Pupils respond positively to challenging questions and to the many opportunities they have to evaluate their own learning and that of their classmates. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils set their own targets following an exercise on division and were able to identify the 'steps to success' in order to complete a line graph accurately reflecting the school's lead status in Rochdale's assessment for the learning action research project.

The curriculum has improved apace since the previous inspection. The school has worked hard to make sure that pupils see the links between subjects and are able to apply the skills gained in one area to all other aspects of their work. The school's extensive involvement in the Manchester Arts Project is now in its third year: pupils have performed at the Library Theatre in Manchester and are looking forward to their latest production on the English Civil War at the end of June. There is excellent take-up of a wide variety of sports activities and pupils benefit from strong links with a local specialist sports college. Pupils themselves speak highly of the outstanding range of extra-curricular activities, including residential experiences, which has an exceptional impact on their personal development, confidence and self-esteem.

Care, guidance and support are of the highest order. Pupils with learning difficulties make the same good progress as their peers as a result of the excellent support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants. These pupils are identified early, supported very well and benefit from most effective strategies to meet their specific needs. Child protection and safeguarding systems are in place and fully meet national guidelines. Academic guidance is very good indeed. Pupils are fully aware of their current performance, of their targets and of what they need to do to reach them. Collaborative work is the order of the day in classrooms and pupils willingly support and act as resource for each other, coming to perceptive conclusions about their progress and about the next steps in their learning.

The senior leadership team's capacity and the contribution of the deputy headteacher in moving the school forward in the continuing absence of the headteacher due to long-term sickness has been impressive. The contribution of the school bursar in the organisation and running of the school since the previous inspection has been exceptional. Leadership and management at all levels are good and the school knows itself well. Leaders have a clear vision for how the school should develop and this is shared by staff at all levels of responsibility and experience. As teachers say, 'If we feel enthusiastic about something, we are encouraged by our leaders and by our colleagues.' Equality of opportunity is promoted well and staff work hard to foster the progress, both personal and academic, of each individual pupil in their care. Governors are fully supportive of the school but are never afraid to challenge the leadership when they feel it necessary to do so. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory and developing strategies to broaden pupils' cultural horizons are a focus of future plans.

The maintenance of good achievement, above average standards and pupils' excellent personal development over time demonstrate that the school has good capacity to improve further. It provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good provision and effective leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage enable children to make a good start to their education and to become happy and receptive learners. Children enter the Nursery class with expected skills levels for their age. They achieve well across both Nursery and Reception and make exceptional progress in their personal, social and emotional development. By the end of the Reception year, children have also gained significantly in confidence and enthusiasm for learning.

Daily sessions which focus on letters and sounds are helping to boost early reading and writing skills and have started to impact positively on children's achievement in literacy. The quality of teaching is good and stimulates learning well. The curriculum provides activities, both indoors and outside, which are well matched to the children's needs and provide them with interest and fun. The Reception class outdoor area is smaller than the well-resourced Nursery space but staff here work hard to ensure that children have good opportunities to learn outdoors. Children interact very well with each other and enjoy warm relationships with the very caring staff. Excellent arrangements, including strong links with external agencies, are in place to ensure children's health and welfare. Parents appreciate the good communications between home and school and the very good care provided for their children. The leader and the effective staff team work together well to promote children's progress and well-being. Children with additional learning needs are supported very well. Children's progress is observed carefully and assessment is systematic, so that extra help is given promptly to those who need it.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure more pupils reach the higher National Curriculum Level 5 in writing.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to become more aware of cultures different to their own.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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 learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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 so much for the wonderful welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school recently. You were very polite and kind to us. We are particularly grateful to those of you who came to talk to us at lunchtime and my colleague really enjoyed the electronic presentation developed by members of the school council. We would now like to tell you the really good things we found out about your school.

St Thomas More is a good school and you are so right to be very proud of it! Your teachers teach you well and you make good progress in your studies so that you reach standards which are higher than in many other schools. The Manchester Arts Project is an important part of school life and your acting and dance in the hall when you were rehearsing the English Civil War production were marvellous!

Your behaviour is excellent in lessons and around school. You are not afraid to give visitors advice on how to eat healthily and to stay fit and you enjoy the many sports activities, which are open to you. The school council and 'playground pals' do so much to represent your views and to make sure that everyone is happy. You also raise a lot of money for people who are not as fortunate as you are.

Your teachers and teaching assistants look after you exceptionally well and they encourage you to work out for yourselves how well you are doing. As a result, you know exactly how to improve your work.

As you know, nothing is ever perfect and so we have asked your school to do two things to make it even better. We have asked your teachers to do all they can to make sure that more of you reach the higher National Curriculum Level 5 in writing. We have also asked them to give you more opportunities to become aware of cultures which are different to your own.

Thanks again for your kindness and for your contribution to the inspection. Please keep looking after each other and enjoying life at St Thomas More.