

St Richard's Roman Catholic Primary School Atherton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106498
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	324413
Inspection dates	12–13 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Jim Crouch

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	190
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	Mrs Catherine Price
Headteacher	Mrs Dawn Nulty
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Flapper Fold Lane Atherton Manchester Lancashire M46 0HA

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	12–13 January 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized school with Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision in the form of a Reception class. It serves the Parish of St Richard's in Atherton, a community which experiences some social disadvantage. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, but the small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds is increasing, as is the proportion who are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The proportion with a statement of special educational need is below average. A small number of pupils are in public care. The number of pupils who join or leave the school at other than the usual times is higher than average.

An acting headteacher was in post from September 2008 until the current headteacher took up her post in January 2009.

The school is an accredited Healthy School and also holds the Activemark and Eco-school award.

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 good features in the way that it promotes pupils' personal and social development and their care and well-being. Parents value the high quality care shown to their children and the partnership they enjoy with the school. Teachers know their pupils well. Warm and supportive relationships result in friendly, smiling pupils who thrive, feel very secure and are ready to learn. While the school has sustained many of the strengths identified in the last inspection it has not kept pace with national developments, especially in the curriculum, in teaching and learning and in helping pupils to assess and improve their own learning.

Children join the school with skills and abilities that are broadly typical for their age. The quality of teaching across the school is satisfactory with some strengths and, as a result, pupils' progress and achievement are satisfactory overall and standards are average. Good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/disabilities and the good use of intervention strategies and booster sessions are enabling these pupils to make good progress and have resulted in an improvement in standards in 2008. However, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 varies between subjects and is not always as high as it could be. Teaching does not always focus on meeting the needs of the more able pupils; as a result, they are not always sufficiently challenged and do not progress as well as they might. Pupils' behaviour is well managed in lessons and they show good attitudes to learning. Their good behaviour contributes well to their learning.

The satisfactory curriculum meets statutory requirements and is enriched through a broad range of after-school clubs and visits which pupils clearly enjoy. The school is generally well resourced, but weaknesses in the design of, and access to, the EYFS outdoor learning space means it is not used as well as it might be. Personal development is good. Pupils are happy, enjoy school, behave well and attend regularly. They are eager to learn and are caring and considerate towards each other. They show a good awareness of how to stay safe and develop healthy lifestyles. They are making satisfactory progress in preparing for their future economic well-being. Pupils are aware of their targets in English and mathematics, but do not receive consistently good information on what they have achieved or effective guidance about what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has worked successfully with the deputy headteacher to identify areas for development. A good system for tracking pupils' progress is in place and this is used well by senior leaders to set school targets and to monitor individual pupils' progress. Information from this and other sources is used to inform the school improvement plan. However, arrangements for monitoring and evaluating other aspects of the school's work are less well established and, as a result, the school has overestimated the effectiveness of some aspects of its work. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall, as is the capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children join the Reception class with skills and abilities that are broadly typical for their age, although some have weaknesses in areas of language, personal development and mathematics. Good links with Nursery providers and parents ensure that children's particular needs are identified early, which helps them settle in quickly. They make satisfactory progress and, in

some cases, good progress in weaker areas of their learning so that most are working securely within the nationally expected goals at the end of the EYFS. A strong emphasis on promoting care and personal development means that relationships are good. Children work well together, share equipment and move around the classroom with confidence, complying with established routines and expectations. They enjoy working in the safe and supportive environment, particularly when they are able to engage in independent learning. However, children are not given sufficient opportunities to initiate and direct their own learning and, therefore, do not progress as well as they might. Resources to promote learning are satisfactory. Free movement between indoor and outdoor learning spaces is restricted to some extent by the layout of the building. This, and the lack of cover to the Reception class outdoor learning space, means that these children do not have sufficient opportunities to benefit from playing and learning outside.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the outdoor provision for Reception children.
- Ensure that teaching meets the needs of all learners and in particular the more able.
- Ensure that pupils are well informed of the progress they are making and what they need to do to improve.
- Ensure that the information gained from monitoring and evaluating the school's provision is used more rigorously to improve pupils' performance.

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

Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils enter Year 1 with skills and abilities that are close to those expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress and, in the case of some groups of learners, good progress through Key Stage 1. As a result attainment is broadly average, although the proportion achieving Level 3 in reading and mathematics is below average. Most pupils make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 2, but with some variation between subjects. In the Key Stage 2 tests in 2007, standards were above average in English, but below in science, particularly with regard to the proportion attaining Level 5 in that subject. The good use of intervention strategies to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and other pupils who need extra help, means that a significant number of these pupils now make good progress, particularly in Year 6. However, for the majority of pupils, progress remains satisfactory. Provisional data for 2008 indicate that, partly as a result of effective interventions and booster classes, standards attained by Year 6 pupils were above average, particularly in English and mathematics. The school met its targets for the numbers attaining Levels 4 and 5 in English and exceeded its target for Level 4 in mathematics. The small number of pupils, whose first language is not English, receive good support and make good progress in their learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' attendance is good, they behave well and show a real enthusiasm for learning. They enjoy contributing to the life of the school as play-leaders and as members of the school council and say that they would like to be able to do even more. They have a good understanding of the importance of developing healthy life styles through choosing healthy foods at break and

lunchtime and joining in the good range of sporting activities available to them. They feel safe in school, 'Because everyone gets on really well.' Bullying is not a problem and pupils are sure they can turn to a member of staff if they need help. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a strong sense of right and wrong. Pupils are sensitive to the needs of others, which is well illustrated by their charity fundraising. They are proud of the school and its surroundings. They have contributed to the development of the very good outdoor play area for pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 and talk in a mature and informed way of the importance of clearing litter and of recycling. They are making satisfactory progress in preparing for their future economic well-being, but do not have sufficient opportunities to develop enterprise skills and, in particular, the ability to work independently.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although there is some good teaching, typically, lessons do not take sufficient account of the needs of different groups of learners. Teaching tends to focus on developing and securing core knowledge and understanding. Opportunities to challenge pupils and to develop their higher level and independent learning skills are missed and pupils do not progress as well as they might. Teachers establish good working relationships with their pupils. They make good use of praise and pupils are keen to contribute to the lesson because they know their ideas will be valued. Resources such as interactive whiteboards are used effectively to bring lessons to life and pupils have good access to computers to carry out research and enhance the presentation of their work. Teaching assistants are a valuable part of the teaching team. They provide sensitive, well focused support for groups and individuals, but lesson plans do not always indicate how they will be deployed throughout the lesson. Pupils' work is marked regularly and there are good examples of the use of rewards to encourage high standards. However, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to check their own work and reflect on how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The provision for English and mathematics ensures pupils have a sound basis from which to develop further learning. Programmes of work are in place for all subjects and reviewed by subject leaders. Cross-curricular work is being developed in the subjects other than English, mathematics and science, particularly in Key Stage 1. This is helping to embed the skills and knowledge gained, in literacy and numeracy particularly. However, there is a need for greater coordination in planning at all levels to ensure effective challenge for all learners. The curriculum contributes well to pupils' personal development and their learning is enriched by good provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and the teaching of French for pupils in Year 4. Good links with a number of partner organisations enhance pupils' learning in sports, art and music. For example, the school is currently engaged in a year-long music project providing brass tuition for all Year 4 pupils. The school makes good use of visits and visiting speakers to extend pupils' learning and raise their awareness of the world in which they live.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school is at the heart of the community it serves, working alongside the church and other local organisations to meet the needs of pupils and their parents. Pupils benefit from very well established induction and transition arrangements. Strong links with partner high schools ensure that pupils approach their next phase of education with confidence. The arrangements for inclusion and support are a strength of the school. Vulnerable learners are identified at an early stage and individual education plans are used well to support progress. Good links with outside agencies ensure, for example, that pupils who speak little or no English receive appropriate support and are quickly integrated into the life of the school. The school takes its responsibility for safeguarding pupils very seriously and arrangements meet statutory requirements. Academic and personal targets are shared with pupils and parents. However, procedures for reviewing targets and helping pupils to improve are not firmly embedded. As result, their progress is not as good as it could be.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Senior leaders know pupils and their parents very well and have created a school that is greatly valued by the community. They manage pupils' care and well-being well. Good links with parents, external agencies and partner organisations enable the school to contribute well to the local community, for example, through its links with the Hag Fold Estate. However, apart from the school's involvement with the diocese and its charity work, links with communities further afield are less well established. Since its last inspection, the school has had only limited success in addressing issues raised at that time and has not kept pace with national developments. As a result a number of strategies to improve the curriculum, teaching and learning and involving pupils in assessing and improving their work are in the early stages of development and are not yet leading to sustained good progress. The school has good systems in place for tracking pupils' progress. There are examples of good practice in monitoring pupils' work in mathematics, but this is yet to be extended to all subject areas. Staff development is linked to performance management and the school is working well with the local authority to promote improvements in teaching and learning. The school is taking steps to improve the leadership skills of its subject coordinators, but this is only just beginning to have an impact on the school's effectiveness. It also recognises the need to develop its improvement planning, including increasing the involvement of governors, middle leaders and others in the process. Governors know the school and its community well. They are aware of the main priorities for improvement.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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	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 learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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

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

Thank you for welcoming the inspectors when we inspected your school recently and being so polite and friendly. We enjoyed talking to you and hearing all of the things you like about your school.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education. I was particularly impressed by your good behaviour and your keenness to do well in lessons. You show good awareness of the needs of others through your charity work and the way in which pupils new to the school are welcomed by you all. The staff have worked hard to help you enjoy your education by developing a good range of visits and extra activities in sport, music and art. I found that your school looks after you well and that you make satisfactory progress because teaching overall is satisfactory.

There are four important things that could be better. I have asked the school to improve how you are taught so that you are all able to make good progress in your lessons. I also want to make sure that those of you in Reception class spend more time learning in the outside area. I have also asked the school to make you more aware of how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve. In addition, I have asked your headteacher and the staff to check more carefully on the work of the school so that that they know better how to improve things even more.

Of course, you also have an important part to play in helping your school to carry on improving. You can do this by trying really hard with your learning as you are now and improving all aspects of your work.

Thank you again for your warm welcome.