

St Mary Magdalenes Roman Catholic Primary School, Burnley

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119489
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	327049
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2009
Reporting inspector	George Crowther

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)	191
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 Michael Molloy
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Stevens
Date of previous school inspection	28 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Wellfield Drive Burnley Lancashire BB12 0JD
Telephone number	01282 436880

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2009
Inspection number	327049

Fax number

01282 831589

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 draws pupils from a wide area. Its social context is no more or less favourable than most schools. A below average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. Almost all the pupils are from White British backgrounds with a very small number from ethnic minorities and none at the early stages of learning English. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, but varies significantly between year groups. At the time of the inspection, the school had an acting headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The current effectiveness of the school is satisfactory, but it is improving rapidly. During a period of considerable staff changes, determined leadership by the acting headteacher has been successful in bringing about significant, recent improvements in pupils' achievement. Many parents say they feel the school is going from strength-to-strength. The school's Christian values create a very friendly, caring environment that gives pupils the confidence to enjoy their learning. Support for pupils' personal development is particularly good. By Year 6, pupils have very positive attitudes to learning, are confident and articulate, and take on a range of responsibilities admirably. Despite these strengths, there are still aspects of pupils' achievement that are not consistently good across the school and there are weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning in some lessons.

Recent improvements are helping the Reception children to achieve well. Good teaching and a wide range of practical activities capture their interest and stimulate their learning. Pupils are making satisfactory progress during Years 1 and 2, and writing skills, which were previously a weakness for some pupils, are improving. In Years 3 to 6, progress is satisfactory overall, and many pupils in Years 5 and 6 are now making good progress because lessons are increasingly interesting and challenging. Across the school, however, the quality of teaching and learning varies too much. The best lessons help pupils to learn quickly; in others, pupils are not sufficiently active in their learning and the work is not challenging enough to ensure good progress. Standards in Year 6 are above average, and well above average in reading.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and are usually keen to learn in lessons. They are friendly, polite and impeccably behaved. Relationships are good and pupils of all ages mix together happily. The pupils have a good understanding about being healthy and they feel safe and cared for. They make outstanding contributions to the school community, for example, as members of the school council and when Year 6 pupils support Reception children in their work and play. Pupils' good personal qualities prepare them well for the future, and their academic skills are improving quickly. The curriculum is broad and interesting, with strengths in sport and music, and a wide range of activities both in and out of lessons. A strong emphasis on improving the curriculum in English, mathematics and science has reduced the time for other subjects, such as history and geography both of which have weakened as a result.

Leaders have shown great determination in implementing very positive changes to the ways in which pupils' learning is managed. For example, a rigorous system to track pupils' progress has enabled leaders to identify and tackle potential underachievement. New approaches to teaching mathematics and science have introduced more practical work that has boosted pupils' enjoyment and skills. At present, however, the impact of these improvements on pupils' achievement is not consistent across the whole school. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and realistic, and gives leaders a clear picture of what needs to be done next. This puts the school in a good position to improve its work still further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

A good induction programme helps children to settle quickly in the Reception class and they soon feel safe, secure and well cared for. The staff work well with parents and provide a warm, welcoming atmosphere. One parent spoke for many when she said her daughter is making

significant progress in her personal and academic development. Until recently, children's progress was satisfactory, and so improvements to the Early Years Foundation Stage were identified as a priority. Staff have worked hard to introduce a new curriculum and, as a result, the current Reception children are making good progress, especially in personal development, mathematics and reading. Effective teaching is helping the children to be successful. The staff team provides interesting and exciting activities that are well planned to address children's needs. All areas of learning are covered with an appropriate balance between teacher directed learning and opportunities for children to explore and find things out for themselves. The children are well cared for and, because of positive relationships, children play well together, share toys and equipment and talk about their experiences. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and children's progress is tracked carefully. A high priority is given to developing basic skills of literacy and numeracy. As a result, most children are working well within the early learning goals and are on course to achieve standards in line with the average by the time they enter Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement so it is consistently good right across the school.
- Increase the proportion of lessons where the quality of teaching and learning enables pupils to make rapid 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 the next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory although inspection evidence shows that progress is improving. Children's skills and knowledge, when they start school are broadly typical for their ages. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. During Years 1 and 2, pupils make satisfactory progress overall, and good progress in reading. Better approaches to teaching and learning in writing have led to an improvement in pupils' achievement. Current standards in Year 2 are broadly average. In Years 3 to 6, pupils are making satisfactory progress overall, and many in Years 5 and 6 are now making good progress because the work is increasingly challenging and pupils are more aware of their learning targets. Progress has been boosted by identifying pupils who may be at risk of falling behind and providing extra support. Standards in the current Year 6 have improved and are above average, and well above average in reading; this reflects recent good progress and the fact that this is a more able year group. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and make similar progress to others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

This is a very happy school where the pupils enjoy their learning and show a thoughtful respect for each other and their teachers. By Year 6, they display very positive attitudes to learning. A typical comment was, 'Lessons are fun with lots of interesting, practical activities, but we have to work hard.' Pupils are friendly and polite, and their behaviour is impeccable. Relationships are excellent. Year 6 pupils said one of their favourite jobs is helping with the Reception children as part of the 'seeds and gardeners' initiative. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The day-to-day life of the school, worship, and the curriculum, such as

the wide range of activities out of lessons, give pupils a good understanding of themselves and their place in the wider world. The pupils know how to look after themselves. They realise that a balanced diet and exercise are important for good health. They feel safe in school and know how to stay safe out of school. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school community through many extra responsibilities and the articulate way in which they express their views.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The pupils learn quickly in many lessons, but the quality of teaching and learning varies too much across the school. Lessons are planned carefully and teachers explain clearly what the pupils are going to learn, which gives added purpose to the work. Teachers generally manage pupils' learning well, varying activities to sustain pupils' concentration and using lots of praise to boost pupils' motivation. Teaching assistants provide good support for many pupils, particularly those who find learning difficult. Where learning is particularly good, challenging activities are well matched to pupils' needs and teachers are keen to sustain the pace of learning throughout the lesson. Imaginative activities motivate the pupils, such as when Year 5 devised questions to interview a famous footballer. In some lessons, however, teachers talk for too long rather than getting the pupils fully involved in learning; tasks are not very interesting and as a result, the pace of learning is not fast enough. Good systems for assessing pupils' skills and tracking their progress place a strong emphasis on how well pupils are learning. The information is used effectively to support pupils who may be falling behind. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also tracked thoroughly, which has contributed to good gains for these pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets the needs and interests of the pupils. It has a number of strengths, such as music and sport, and the wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. Recently, considerable progress has been made in strengthening the curriculum in English, mathematics and science. For example, a greater emphasis has been placed on practical and investigational work. Despite these improvements, however, pupils' achievement in the core subjects is still not yet consistently good across the school. Some other subjects, such as history and geography, are not making sufficient contribution to the curriculum. An excellent range of music activities, such as brass band and choir, have a significant impact on pupils' ability to perform, appreciate and enjoy music. All pupils learn Italian. Sports coaching, visitors to the school and visits to local places of interest, and a residential outdoor experience all enhance pupils' learning and enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes very good care of pupils and has effective systems to ensure their safety. Staff know the pupils well and ensure that each child is happy, safe and ready to learn. The pupils are also taught to care for each other. All statutory requirements for safeguarding are met and the school has good partnerships with other care organisations. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported effectively in lessons and involved in all the school

has to offer. Systems to track pupils' progress have improved recently and are good. The information is being used effectively to set targets in literacy and numeracy which are helping pupils to identify what they need to learn next. The best marking of pupils' work reminds them of the next steps in learning, but this is not consistent across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

During the past year, the acting headteacher has been successful in enabling the school to make significant improvements to pupils' progress. Leaders have sustained and strengthened the very positive, caring environment, which supports pupils' learning effectively. They have introduced good systems to track the progress of individual pupils, linked to challenging targets to encourage better achievement. A strong focus on improving pupils' skills in writing, mathematics and science has led to rising standards, particularly in Year 6. As a result, many pupils are now achieving well and current standards in Year 6 are above average. At present, the impact of these improvements is not consistent across the whole school and there are groups of pupils who are still not doing as well as they could. Similarly, in concentrating on improving pupils' basic skills, weaknesses in the broader curriculum have yet to be addressed. Self-evaluation is accurate and realistic. The quality of pupils' learning in lessons is monitored carefully and action is being taken to tackle weaknesses. Governors have steered the school successfully through a period of change. They know the school very well and have a good grasp of what needs to be done next. Community cohesion is satisfactory. The school community has strong shared values and is actively equipping pupils to live and thrive alongside people from different backgrounds. Strengths in leadership and management, and recent success in raising achievement, put the school in a good position to improve further.

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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	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?	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	3

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	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?	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?	2

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	2
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	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	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**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary Magdalene's Roman Catholic Primary School, Burnley, Lancashire, BB12 0JD

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we inspected your school to find out how well you are doing. The happy, positive atmosphere in your school helps everyone to enjoy their learning.

You told us you enjoy being at school and this was obvious when we watched you in lessons and in the playground. You like the interesting work in lessons, particularly when it is practical, and the wide range of activities in sport and music. You make a very good contribution to your school community through your excellent behaviour, good attitudes to learning and the wide range of jobs you do that help your school to run smoothly. The Year 6 pupils said they particularly like their 'seeds and gardeners' links with the children in the Reception class. You said you feel safe in school because you know the adults look after you.

From visiting lessons and looking at your work, it is clear that many of you are making good progress and you have improved your skills this year. We did find, however, that there are still some of you who are not making as much progress as you could because lessons are not helping you to learn quickly enough. While many of you are doing well in improving your skills in reading, writing and mathematics, your work in some other subjects is not as good as it could be. You learn well in many lessons, particularly when your teachers involve you in lots of practical activities. You say there interesting things to do at school, and we agree. You told us how much you enjoy activities such as playing in the sports teams and singing in the choir. The staff look after you well and help you to be happy at school. Your acting headteacher and the staff are keen to make your school even better.

We have asked your school to improve your learning by:

- helping everyone to make good progress with their work
- making sure that you learn quickly in all your lessons and that you are fully involved in activities.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school.

Yours sincerely

George Crowther

Lead inspector