

Lea St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119634
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	327094
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Kathleen McArthur

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)	84
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 Gerard Oakes
Headteacher	Mrs Rachel Kilner
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Darkinson Lane Lea Town Preston Lancashire PR4 0RJ

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2009
Inspection number	327094

Telephone number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

This small school draws pupils from a wide area. The proportion of pupils entitled to receive free school meals is lower than average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The Early Years Foundation Stage is provided in a Reception class. Pupils are taught in four classes each covering two year groups every morning. During the afternoon, pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 are taught together in one class. There has been considerable staff turnover since the previous inspection, including a new headteacher and one senior appointment. The school holds an Activemark for sport, as well as Healthy Schools and Basic Skills Awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Lea St Mary's is a satisfactory school. The inspection agreed with the school's evaluation of its effectiveness. It is a harmonious and inclusive community of happy pupils who enjoy school. The school has experienced a long period of unusually high staffing disruption and turnover since the previous inspection. Despite this, the headteacher, senior teacher and governors have tenaciously maintained their vision for school improvement. Parental comments showed positive views of the school's ethos and values, saying their children are happy. Several parents particularly praised the staff. A number were concerned about staffing disruption; the inspection found that leadership has done everything possible to remedy this situation.

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6. Year groups are small and vary in size and ability from year to year; just one pupil can make a difference to the outcomes in national tests. Progress is satisfactory. The unavoidable staffing disruptions affected both progress and standards over recent years, particularly in mathematics, and some underachievement remains. Rigorous actions to remedy this, including new appointments, additional support and staff development, are making a positive impact as the staffing situation stabilises. The school has convincing data to show that progress is accelerating. During the inspection, examples of good progress were seen in lessons and pupils' books. Teaching is satisfactory. Pupils know they are expected to work hard and say their teachers are fair and make work fun. Recent appointments have invigorated the staff team and boosted the quality of teaching and learning, but good quality teaching is not yet consistently available to all pupils.

Personal development is good. Attendance is above average. Pupils behave well, say they enjoy school and feel very safe there. They show good understanding of the importance of a healthy diet and exercise. Good relationships support learning and pupils work well cooperatively, especially in group tasks. The curriculum is satisfactory and provides balanced coverage of all subjects, including information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils say they enjoy the recently introduced topic approach that links arts and humanities subjects. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pupils are well cared for and staff know their pupils well. Robust systems are in place to monitor academic progress but feedback to pupils about their work is inconsistent, and they are not yet involved in the assessment of their learning.

Leadership is satisfactory. Issues from the previous inspection have been tackled; progress is beginning to accelerate, teaching assistants are deployed effectively and lesson plans match work to different abilities. The drive for improvement is shared and understood by all staff but most subject leadership is at an early stage of development. Governors and senior staff are fully aware of what needs to be done to consolidate current improvements and work closely to implement their objectives of enhancing provision for every pupil. The capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children benefit from a positive start in the Reception class and are happy in their work. Attainment on entry is close to average. Children make satisfactory progress overall, and good progress in their personal and social development. They leave Reception with levels of attainment expected for their age, fully equipped to access the national curriculum in Year 1. Staff work well as a team. They ensure children are well cared for and feel secure and happy in school;

welfare arrangements are good. Children behave well and are eager to explore all activities offered. Teaching is satisfactory and improving; good teaching was observed when children eagerly acted out how to make a pizza. This practical activity helped them make good progress in the writing activity that followed. Children's progress is carefully monitored and recorded to ensure they do not fall behind. Staff make good use of the space and resources and plan a suitable blend of adult-directed and child-chosen activities. Outdoor provision supports learning in all areas. For example, children enjoyed imagining they were on holiday at the seaside, taking off their shoes and socks to investigate the sand. Leadership is satisfactory, and has appropriate plans for further development. These include improving the outdoor area, which is reached by several steps that limit children's continuous access.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and accelerate progress throughout the school, particularly pupils' calculation skills in mathematics.
- Ensure all teaching matches the best practice found in the school.
- Involve pupils in assessing their own work so they understand what they must do to improve it.
- Develop subject leadership to include responsibility for monitoring and raising standards.

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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. In 2008, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 were below average and well below average in mathematics. This year group experienced a very high level of unavoidable staffing turnover throughout their time in school. School data show that extra input and targeted support resulted in good progress in Year 6 but pupils had too much distance to cover and could not catch up, most particularly in mathematics. School data show that most pupils currently in Year 6 are well on course to meet their individual predictions, based on very challenging targets set to raise aspirations. Pupils do well in science; over half the year group is on track for the higher level because they enjoy the practical investigations in science. In mathematics, pupils often find it hard to recall number facts swiftly in calculations. Standards in Key Stage 1 dropped to just below average in 2008, having been above average in previous years. Unvalidated teacher assessments show that pupils currently in Year 2 attained the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics, with almost half at the higher Level 3 in mathematics. Pupils with additional learning needs receive appropriate support and make satisfactory progress in relation to their capabilities. Throughout the school, pupils demonstrate good oral skills and express ideas and answers clearly using a broad range of vocabulary.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are caring and considerate, cooperative and helpful and show respect for different faiths and lifestyles. They know how to care for their health, enjoy all sporting activities and are keen to taste the vegetables grown by gardening club members. They feel safe in school, say bullying is not a problem and are

confident that staff will listen to and act on any of their concerns. They think the rules are fair and necessary to ensure the school is safe for everyone. They spoke enthusiastically about earning 'Golden Time' and are keen to gain points for their teams. Cycling proficiency, road safety and swimming tuition help pupils understand how to keep themselves safe in potentially dangerous situations. Pupils behave well, use the stairs and doors with care, and are sensible in the dining room and when playing outside, where they are well supervised. School councillors are proud of their roles and contribution in organising fundraising, for example a pyjama day, which also gives them useful experience of organising mini-enterprises. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about activities shared with the church, recalling how members of the local community joined them at the Lenten Masses and breakfast in school. Preparation for future economic well-being is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The inspection found that while there are examples of good practice in teaching, this is not consistently available to all pupils. Teaching is, therefore, satisfactory overall. Most lessons are well planned and organised with work suitably matched to pupils of different abilities. The best lessons feature open-ended questions that really promote pupils' thinking and reasoning skills, and lead to some lively discussions. Teachers use many resources, including ICT to capture and hold pupils' attention. Teaching assistants are deployed well and use their skills effectively when supporting particular groups, usually pupils with learning difficulties, enabling them to participate in all activities. Good relationships feature in all classes. Staff make effective use of praise to reinforce learning and increase pupils' confidence so they try harder to succeed. At times, the pace of lessons is too slow and pupils have to listen for a long time. Consequently, they are not engaged by their tasks so their attention wanders, they lose concentration and progress is slower.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets all current requirements. Appropriate focus is placed on developing literacy and numeracy skills as well as science and ICT, but other subjects are not neglected. The school's self-evaluation identified the need to increase pupils' engagement with learning in order to raise standards. Consequently, humanities and arts subjects are being linked in creative topics shared across the school, and pupils spoke enthusiastically about this. Adaptations and support ensure pupils with additional needs have full access to all curriculum activities. The good programme for personal development ensures pupils become increasingly mature and thoughtful. A broad range of enrichment activities is provided, including visits, music and French. Year 4 and 5 pupils are all learning a woodwind instrument. After-school clubs and sports activities with other schools are very popular.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are well cared for so they feel safe and secure in school and know adults are available if they need help. Child protection and safeguarding arrangements meet all current requirements. Sound provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those with

statements of their individual needs ensures they participate fully and make satisfactory progress. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Assessment and tracking systems give staff a clear picture of how well pupils are doing so they can direct help where needed. Feedback to pupils about how well they are doing is variable. Work is usually marked and gives praise appropriately but does not always show pupils how to improve. Pupils know their targets, recorded in their progress books, but are not yet given any responsibility for nor are involved in assessing their own learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The shared focus of the headteacher, senior teacher and governors on school improvement by setting challenging targets is beginning to have an impact; this is evident in rising standards and better progress. Rigorous self-evaluation procedures clearly identify strengths and what needs to be improved, expressed in robust development plans focused on accelerating achievement and raising standards. The staffing disruption means the effectiveness of subject leadership is limited. Literacy is led well but, in the other core subjects, leadership and responsibility for monitoring progress and standards are not fully delegated and fall heavily upon senior leaders. Equal opportunities are promoted well and there is no evidence of discrimination. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. Pupils' understanding of other cultures and involvement in the village community through the parish are well developed but they are less aware of global issues. Governance is satisfactory. The well led governing body supported the school through the period of disruption, brings useful local and parish links and is becoming more involved in development planning and self-evaluation. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

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
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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?	3
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	3
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	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	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	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**

24 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lea St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Lancashire, PR4 0RJ

Thank you for making me so welcome when I inspected your school.

You were very polite, friendly and helpful, and it was good to see you enjoying playing together outside in the sunshine. Your good behaviour does you credit and I am sure your parents and teachers are proud of you. This is what I found.

Lea St Mary's is a satisfactory school. You reach the right standards for your age and make satisfactory progress. Your personal development is good, you enjoy school and feel safe and your attendance is good. I was very impressed by the way you look after each other, take responsibility as school councillors and organise charity work.

Most of your lessons are satisfactory and some are good. The curriculum covers every subject and you told me you enjoy the new topic work, going out on visits and earning Golden Time. The staff take good care of you and carefully check how much progress you are making.

The headteacher, senior teacher and governors work hard for the school and make sure everyone can take part in all the activities. Here is what I have asked them to do next.

- Raise standards and improve progress, especially in mathematics.
- Make sure staff share their ideas and skills so you are always taught well.
- Involve you more in assessing how well you are doing.
- Give more responsibility to subject leaders.

I am sure you will help by working hard and continuing to enjoy school.

Best wishes to you all.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Kathleen McArthur

Lead inspector