

# St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Langho

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119642
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	327098
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jennie Platt

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	275
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Angela Corban
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Felicity Watson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 January 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Whalley Road Langho Blackburn Lancashire BB6 8EQ

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 November 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	327098

**Telephone number**  
**Fax number**

01254 247157  
01254 247283

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is an average size school in an area of social and economic advantage. A very low proportion of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and no pupils use English as an additional language. A much lower than average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities but an above average number of pupils have a statement of special educational need. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are taught in a Reception class and a mixed-age Reception and Year 1 class.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Mary's is a good school with several excellent features. Personal development is outstanding. Pupils behave extremely well and are very polite, well mannered and pleasant young people. They thoroughly enjoy school and it is not surprising that attendance is well above average. The school is oversubscribed and the great majority of parents are very pleased with the education provided. The amazing singing in assembly reflects a real community atmosphere with parents, staff and pupils coming together to celebrate the school's achievements. This wonderful ethos of friendship pervades the school. Pastoral care is excellent and pupils say they feel safe and know how to look after themselves. One parent summed up the school's many strengths by writing that the feeling around the school is warm and friendly and 'my children are extremely happy and are being educated to the highest level within their ability and are valued as members of the school community'.

Achievement is good. The school has had a disturbed time over the last year with several changes in key staff. This affected the results of national tests in 2008 at the end of Key Stage 2 and the school identifies some underachievement, especially of the higher attaining pupils. Despite these difficulties, the provisional test results were slightly above average. Staffing has now stabilised and more training and better planning are already having an impact on standards. Current standards in English and mathematics are well above average with a significant increase in the number of pupils exceeding the level expected for their age. Science has not received the same attention as literacy and numeracy. Although standards are broadly average, they are not high enough. Pupils do not have the required skills to suggest how to solve a scientific problem or record their findings. Nevertheless, with their high basic skills and excellent personal development pupils are extremely well prepared for the future.

Effective teaching and a rich curriculum are key reasons for achievement being good. Some outstanding teaching was seen with inspirational teachers enthusing the pupils so that learning is accelerating. Throughout the school teachers make lessons interesting. The imaginative approaches lead to a real enthusiasm for learning. Drama often plays a part leading to pupils growing in confidence and self-esteem. New assessment procedures in literacy and numeracy are starting to impact on future planning but these are yet to be embedded throughout the school. The school has kept a good balance in the curriculum as is evident in the sound of pupils and staff playing a variety of brass instruments and the high quality artwork on display.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is an excellent leader and her skills complement those of the new deputy headteacher so that they provide a dynamic team. The headteacher sustained an even keel through staffing changes and the deputy has instantly set to work sharpening up assessment. Self-evaluation is accurate and the response to weaknesses is effective as can be seen in the improvement in writing throughout the school. The school has struggled to develop the role of subject leaders since the last inspection as staff have changed roles and responsibilities. Currently, subject leaders carry out detailed audits and identify the correct areas to develop. As yet, they are less confident in drawing up action plans and setting clear and measurable targets for improvement. Governance is excellent and governors play a full role in school life as well as being involved in major management decisions. They recognise the importance of working closely with the community and this aspect of the school is outstanding. The school is now in a good position to move forward.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Parents are very pleased with the care children receive as they start school. Teachers recognise the importance of making learning fun so that the start to the children's education life is positive and enjoyable. One parent summed this up as 'making the big step of starting school a pleasure that she will always remember'. This is indicative of the parents' appreciation of the good care their children receive and the warm and friendly relationships evident in the classrooms. As a result, personal development is excellent and children make friends quickly. It was a delight to see their confidence and excitement as they prepare for their first nativity play. Teaching is good and staff understand the needs of these young children. Occasionally, support staff do not give enough attention to children's learning or the pace is too slow as children wait for their turn. A good balance of free choice and activities led by staff increases children's independent skills which are often underdeveloped when they start school. Overall, children's skills and knowledge on entry are slightly above what is typical for this age although this varies each year. Achievement is good and children reach above average standards by the time they start in Year 1. The curriculum is stimulating and solidly based on learning through play and first-hand experiences. The outdoor space is used well but is small and not easy to access. Leadership and management are good and the school is well ahead of the game in implementing new changes for this age range. A detailed audit of need has been carried out but as yet this has not been followed up with a clear plan of action.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the teaching of science giving pupils more opportunities to come up with their own ideas and follow through a line of enquiry.
- Improve assessment and embed the new procedures in literacy and numeracy so that staff have a more precise view of pupils' current standards and use this information when planning future work.
- Follow up the detailed audits that subject leaders carry out with clear action plans and measurable targets for improvement.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Achievement is good. From entering school with standards which are slightly above what is typical for their age pupils make good progress and leave school with overall standards well above average. Progress is good in Key Stage 1. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 have been consistently above average and this continues to be the case.

The results of national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 have been more variable over recent years. There has been an increase in the number of pupils starting school during Key Stage 2 and these pupils have not always had the same quality of experiences in their earlier education. The results of national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2007 were broadly average and indications point to a rise to slightly above average in the provisional 2008 results. Staffing changes last year hampered some changes being put in place and the school identified underachievement for the more able pupils especially in writing. The response to this has been very effective for example, through appropriate staff training and the implementation of the new literacy programme. With the good and occasionally outstanding teaching in Key Stage 2, overall standards are now well above average in English and mathematics. Although standards in

science are broadly average pupils lack confidence to set up an investigation and come forward with their own ideas.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the support they receive. Those with a statement of special educational needs make excellent progress to meet the targets set for them. This is very evident for those who need guidance in communication or personal skills. They clearly flourish with support from all staff and their peers.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

As at the time of the last inspection, this is a real strength in the school. Pupils have an excellent understanding of keeping safe. They feel secure because of extremely friendly relationships and the very positive Christian ethos is evident throughout the school. A real sense of mutual respect exists between teachers and pupils. As a school councillor said, 'Teachers make learning fun'. As a result, behaviour is excellent. Pupils show respect for each other and are attentive in lessons. Attendance is well above the national average reflecting pupils' excellent enjoyment of school. This pleasure in school extends to keeping fit and their energetic but well organised play activities are just one example of the pupils' very thorough understanding of caring for themselves.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. School assemblies create a real feeling of spirituality as pupils enter these singing and appreciate the talents of other pupils. When parents and relatives attend, these occasions promote a real sense of community and belonging. One parent sums this up as being part of 'an extended family'. The school is at the core of the community with the pupils having close links with the church and parishioners also supporting the school. The school expands pupils' understanding of their role in society to a global dimension as they work towards becoming an Eco school and gaining Fairtrade status. In school, older pupils develop their citizenship skills further through their work as playground friends and leaders. Pupils' high levels of self-confidence and their good basic skills prepare them extremely well for the future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is good with some outstanding features. Teachers strive to add that little extra that captures pupils' interest and gives that extra spark to the lesson. This was evident in a Year 2 history lesson where the teacher clearly recognises that history makes the most impact for pupils when it is illustrated. Images on the interactive whiteboard of soldiers fighting in the First World War gripped the pupils' attention and effective questioning led them to find clues about the war. Management and organisation is effective and lessons run smoothly. Speaking and listening skills are enhanced with lively debate and drama. Planning is good and teachers share with pupils what they are to learn and encourage pupils to evaluate their learning at the end of the lesson. The new assessment procedures in literacy and numeracy are giving staff a more precise picture of pupils' standards. This is improving the match of work to ability, although there are still times when work is not hard enough and pupils are insufficiently challenged to set up their own line of enquiry. Marking of pupils' work is thorough. In writing there are often good comments about how to improve but this is less evident in other subjects.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school has given great thought to providing a curriculum that takes account of the needs of all pupils in the mixed-age classes. Careful planning means that no topics are missed or repeated. Excitement is added with special theme days and subject weeks which keep the focus on enjoyable learning. The annual Citizenship Week expertly promotes community cohesion as pupils learn to understand different views, faiths and cultures. While keeping the momentum on raising standards in literacy and numeracy, the pleasure in art and music is not lost. Science is planned well to cover the National Curriculum but there is insufficient emphasis on investigation. Information and communication technology (ICT) is being used well across the curriculum as was seen in an effective Year 6 history lesson. The school adapts the curriculum sensitively for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they can play a full part in the everyday life of the school.

The school provides a very good range of visits, visitors and extremely well attended clubs including sports, French and chess. These activities widen pupils' horizons and their understanding of the world around them.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Pastoral care is excellent. Staff know pupils well and are quick to respond to their needs. School rules are very well explained and pupils feel secure because they understand what is expected of them. Bullying is rare and, when it occurs, it is resolved to the satisfaction of both parties. Safeguarding procedures are in place and staff and governors keep a watchful eye out for any potential hazards.

Systems to track pupils' academic progress accurately spot if a pupil is underachieving. This has been effective in providing extra help for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, these procedures have not always been regular enough or sufficiently accurate and this contributed to some underachievement of the more able pupils in recent national tests. The school is tackling this well with new, more precise, termly assessments for literacy and numeracy but these are not yet embedded across the school or extended to other subjects.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The strength in leadership and management is the headteacher's dynamic enthusiasm and commitment to ensuring that whatever happens the school will run smoothly. Over the last year she has overcome the difficulties caused by staff changes and standards are now rising. With a strong leadership team the school has accurately evaluated what is happening in school and action is in place to tackle the most important issues. The success of this self-evaluation is evident in the rise in writing especially for the more able pupils.

Improvement since the last inspection is good overall although the role of subject leaders continues to be a focus for the school. Changes in responsibilities have hampered the progress of improvement but leaders do carry out detailed audits and identify priorities for their subjects. However, unless these priorities are included in the school's improvement plan, there is no recorded evidence of how change is to be managed and success measured. Governance is



excellent. Governors bring a wide and valuable range of experiences to the school that are fully exploited to the benefit of the pupils. They are prepared to challenge and also to support the headteacher when some tricky decisions need to be made. A major feature of the school is its understanding that it is a key facility for the community. They recognise some parents would appreciate extended care for their children and are reviewing options to bring this about. This cohesion with the local and wider community is excellent and carefully audited so that it has developed over recent years to enrich both the school and the community.

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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?	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?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup>Grade 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

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
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	1

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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?	1
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	1
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**

21 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Langho, Lancashire, BB6 8EQ

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school. You were very helpful to us and made our short visit very enjoyable. This letter is to share with you what we found.

You go to a good school with several outstanding features. Your personal development, including your behaviour, is excellent and we know that you were eager to show us that it has improved since the last inspection. Well done! We were pleased to see you all being so energetic at play and you have a thorough understanding of the importance of keeping fit and healthy. Your teachers and other staff take very good care of you and we are pleased you feel safe. It is very clear that you enjoy school and your attendance is excellent. Teachers are good at making your lessons interesting and this enables you all to make good progress. Your school is well managed so that it runs smoothly and even when difficulties arise the headteacher and staff do everything possible to prevent them disrupting your learning. By the time you leave school you are extremely well prepared for the future.

There are three things we have asked the school to do:

- to include more investigation in science lessons
- to check your progress in literacy and mathematics as closely as possible
- to write action plans for the different subjects in school.

For you the most important things are to carry on doing your best and enjoying school. I am sure it is going to get even more exciting as you prepare for Christmas.

We wish you every happiness for the future.

Yours sincerely

Jennie Platt, David Edwards and Will Gale

Inspectors