

St Charles' RC School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119650
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	327100
Inspection dates	10–11 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Andree Keddle

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)	196
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	Father Martin Dowd
Headteacher	Mrs Dorothy Casey
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Knowles Street Rishton Blackburn Lancashire BB1 4HT
Telephone number	01254 886110
Fax number	01254 882784

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	10–11 June 2009
Inspection number	327100

© 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 inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Charles' Roman Catholic Primary School is a smaller than average primary school where almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The school serves the town of Rishton, an industrial town on the outskirts of Blackburn. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average and the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is above average. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award and the Eco Schools Bronze Award. There is registered childcare provision on site which is managed independently of the governing body. This was inspected at the same time and is the subject of a separate report.

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 which provides a very caring and inclusive environment in which pupils make good progress in their learning. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils and the nurturing ethos of the school ensure that the pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. In particular, the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding as the result of the many opportunities provided to reflect thoughtfully on issues about faith, culture and diversity.

In their responses to the inspection questionnaire parents are very supportive of the headteacher and staff and comment on the warm welcome they receive. A typical parental comment was: 'The staff in this school are approachable and helpful, nothing is too much trouble and it's always done with a smile.' Pupils' great enjoyment of school is seen in high levels of motivation, excellent attendance and punctuality and their good behaviour. Pupils contribute much to the running of the school by taking on responsibilities as monitors and members of the school council.

In 2008, pupils attained broadly average standards in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2. However, inspection evidence shows that pupils are making good progress and standards are rising in Key Stages 1 and 2. This is a result of the good quality of teaching and learning. Pupils receive good guidance on how to improve from teachers through marking, and rise to challenging targets. There has been some variation in standards during the last three years with a decline in the percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in English and science. Inspectors agree that the school's own data from teachers' assessment of pupils' work shows that more Year 6 pupils than previously are working at Level 5 in English and mathematics and that this proportion is above the national average.

The curriculum is good, meets statutory requirements and is based on well-planned cross-curricular topics which the pupils say they find interesting. For example, pupils in an English lesson were observed comparing the attributes of modern day heroes to mythical heroes and using powerful adjectives to describe their own mythical hero. Tasks are planned which capture the pupils' imagination, such as the making of a bag to store an explorer's map to be used in the jungle role-play area in the Reception class. In addition, there is a good range of extra-curricular activities which are well attended and the school netball team has been particularly successful in the local schools' league.

The leadership and management of the school are good. Senior leaders and subject leaders monitor their subjects well to ensure that teaching and learning are good. These procedures for self-evaluation are well established and give the school an accurate, but broad view of how to improve further. Effective steps have been taken to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection and the school has good capacity to improve further. The governors and senior leaders set a clear direction for the school. Although they set challenging targets for individual pupils, available data is underused to monitor pupils' progress in meeting them. As a result, the school does not pick up well enough on nuances and trends in the performance of year groups over time. The school development plan covers a broad range of improvements without clear links to expected outcomes for pupils.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that are broadly typical for children of this age. There are variations in children's attainment on entry from year group to year group. Similarly, there are variations in the children's attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in the different areas of learning. However, they make satisfactory progress overall and attain standards that are broadly similar to those expected nationally at the end of their Reception year. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well and make satisfactory progress too.

Children's personal development is outstanding. The children show high levels of independence, such as playing games with sustained concentration and choosing their healthy snacks. They behave very well, responding to the clear guidance and encouragement from the staff and show consideration for each other's feelings and needs. They cooperate and share very well and play in harmony as shown by their excellent behaviour in the role-play area.

The provision helps children to learn and develop in a satisfactory way with some good elements. Activities are well planned and challenge the children in a way that is suitable to their needs. A good skills-based approach is used, so that children develop simple skills through experimentation, such as learning how to join materials together using sticky tape. However, the use of the outdoor learning area is underdeveloped and learning through child-initiated activities outside is limited. Adults are well deployed and they support the children's learning effectively. Support for the children's welfare is good and staff ensure that the classroom environment is safe and secure. Good relationships exist between staff, parents, carers and pre-school providers so that the children have a smooth transition into the school.

Assessment of children's progress is ongoing and is recorded electronically. However, not all assessment opportunities are taken up during the normal day-to-day work of the staff. Furthermore, there is no ongoing monitoring of the children's progress through the year by the school's senior leaders. As a result, some variations in the children's attainment in the six areas of learning are not always identified and resolved. Overall, children's achievement is satisfactory as the result of satisfactory provision, leadership and management

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that data is used effectively in setting targets and monitoring the progress of specific groups of learners and year groups so that underachievement can be identified and actions taken to improve matters promptly.
- Develop the outdoor area in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that children develop their skills through regular and sustained access to outdoor activities they initiate.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good and standards overall are above average. Starting points for children entering the school are broadly similar to those expected nationally, but there are variations from year-to-year. The standards reached by pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 are above average in reading and average in writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics has risen over the last three years and is average.

The standards reached by pupils by the end of Year 6 in the national tests in the last three years were broadly in line with the national average in English, mathematics and science. However, inspection evidence shows that standards are rising in Key Stages 1 and 2 because the rate of pupils' progress is now good. Information from teachers' assessments of the present Year 6 class shows that overall standards in English, mathematics and science are now above average. All groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their excellent attendance rates, highly positive attitudes to learning and their good behaviour in lessons. Pupils are thoughtful and have an appreciation of the similarities and differences between people from different faiths, cultures and countries. For example, pupils in Key Stage 2 talk about their greater understanding of life for children in France as the result of having French pen pals. Other pupils are able to talk about meeting and becoming friends with children who are of Asian heritage and learning about their traditions and faith.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and which choices they need to make to keep healthy. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in various situations including when using the Internet. Pupils take on a number of responsibilities in school; older pupils play games with younger children at lunchtimes and others act as monitors. The school council plays an active part in the life of the school. A climbing wall was requested by the pupils and is now installed on the playground. The school's 'Rescue Party' takes part in recycling activities, feeds the birds and plants flowers.

Pupils take part in local activities, such as planting tubs for 'Rishton in Bloom' and sending much appreciated cards to parish members. They attend the church regularly and there is a class mass weekly. Pupils develop good social skills through discussion activities with talk partners. Their good information and communication technology (ICT) skills along with their literacy and numeracy skills contribute well to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Very good relationships between pupils and staff contribute well to pupils' learning. Staff use praise and encouragement effectively and pupils respond well by working hard. Activities are interesting and pupils work cooperatively together. During the inspection, most of the teaching observed was good, with a minority being satisfactory. In the good lessons, there is a brisk pace which ensures that pupils work quickly and complete a good amount of work in the time given. Activities are well planned and sometimes involve tasks that relate well to 'real life.' For example, pupils in Year 6 were observed calculating discounts on clothes in a catalogue sale. Lesson objectives are clear and focused and the children understand fully the work that they have to complete.

In the satisfactory lessons, the pace is not as quick and pupils are not always sure of what they have to do. Sometimes, they spend too long listening to the teacher and this means they

complete less work in the time available. The more able pupils are not challenged as well as in the good lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and provides rich and varied experiences for pupils. Cross-curricular links are made very effectively through well planned topics which make learning more relevant and interesting for pupils. As a result, they are well motivated to learn. The pupils in Key Stage 2 say that they enjoy learning French and writing to their French pen pals. All classes go out of school on educational visits each year and the children in the Year 4/5 class said they were pleased to have visited the Beatles Museum in Liverpool. The curriculum is further enhanced by many visitors such as theatre groups, the accident prevention team and a paramedic.

There is a good range of extra-curricular clubs, such as drawing, games, 'mad science', football and netball. Pupils have the opportunity to undertake new experiences such as a first aid course (Heartstart) and a food preparation course which enables them to serve at the salad bar at lunchtime. Links with another school enable Year 3 pupils work closely with pupils from minority ethnic communities to develop their understanding of another faith and culture; they have also visited a mosque. These activities help to raise pupils' awareness of similarities and differences between people, ensuring that they are well prepared for their future life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of its pupils and all the current requirements for safeguarding pupils are in place. There are good partnerships with other organisations, such as pre-school providers and the local Catholic high school, along with very close and effective relationships with other professionals, such as the school nurse. Pupils' social and emotional needs are supported very well. The very caring ethos and supportive learning environment ensures that the pupils feel safe and they appreciate the nurturing support that is available to them at lunchtime if required.

Marking by teachers ensures that pupils are well informed about the quality of their work. Targets are set for individual pupils and these are in their exercise books or on display in classrooms. Pupils understand their targets and know how much progress they have made. However, the school makes limited use of data pertaining to trends and group of learners.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior leaders provide dedicated leadership and maintain a strongly positive, nurturing ethos based on Christian principles. As a result, pupils make good progress in learning and develop excellent interpersonal skills and respect for others. The school's self-evaluation correctly identifies the strengths and areas for improvement, but reflects the limited use of data to identify and monitor groups of pupils who are not making expected progress or reaching expected attainment levels. Conversely, data about individual pupils is used very well to diagnose specific issues or barriers to learning to give appropriate and effective support.

The school is highly inclusive and a team of committed and skilled teaching assistants provide high quality support to a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school knows its context well and makes a good contribution to community cohesion. There are very good and well established links with a school in France and a local school in Blackburn where most pupils are from Asian heritage. As a result, pupils are able to explain how important it is to appreciate the similarities and differences between people from different faiths and cultures. They understand that racism can be borne out of ignorance and that knowledge and understanding about people different from themselves helps them to appreciate diversity.

Governance is good. Governors are supportive and encouraging. They know the strengths of the school well and work effectively with senior staff. The school has made a number of improvements since the last inspection and gives good 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
--	-----------------------

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?	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?	1
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?	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	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	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	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?	2
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?	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	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?	2
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**

11 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Charles' RC School, Lancashire, BB1 4HT

Thank you very much for welcoming my colleague and me when we inspected your school recently. Thank you for talking to us freely; your views were very helpful. Please thank your parents for replying to the inspection questionnaire and let them know that we have taken their views into account too. You told us that you enjoy school and this is demonstrated by your outstanding attendance. We were impressed with your highly positive attitudes to learning and good manners and behaviour. You cooperate well with each other and you have a very good understanding of the importance of learning about people who may seem to be different from you. You recognise the similarities and differences between people and show respect for others. You understand the importance of living a healthy life and how to keep yourselves safe, including when using the Internet.

Your school provides you with a good education overall, with good teaching and learning. You make good progress and your personal development is outstanding. Your teachers provide you with a good curriculum and it is clear that you enjoy the topics studied in lessons. Even good schools can improve so we have asked the governors, your headteacher and staff to make the following things better.

- Improve the way in which information is used to set targets for groups and classes and check on your progress regularly so that extra help can be given quickly if needed.
- Develop the outdoor area for the children in the Reception class so they can make good use of it in their own way.

You can help by continuing to have good attitudes to learning and by working hard. Please accept my best wishes for the future and do continue to listen well and try your best, so that you can make even more progress and achieve higher standards in your work.

Yours sincerely

Andrée Keddle

Lead inspector