

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Haslingden

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 119663 |
| Local Authority | Lancashire |
| Inspection number | 327102 |
| Inspection dates | 2–3 March 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Carole Cressey |

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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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 102 |
| 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 Cathy Pilling |
| Headteacher | Miss Donna McNicoll |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 June 2006 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Lime Road Haslingden Rossendale Lancashire BB4 5NP |

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|--------------------------|----------------|
| Age group | 4–11 |
| Inspection dates | 2–3 March 2009 |
| Inspection number | 327102 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is situated in an area where there are pockets of social and economic deprivation. Most children come from White British backgrounds; a small proportion are from minority ethnic backgrounds and have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school at various stages of the year is above average. The school has Early Years Foundation Stage provision in a Reception class.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that is exceptionally well led and managed. The headteacher's warmth, high expectations for every pupil, clear sense of direction, high level of professionalism and gritty determination have galvanised all connected with the school. As a result of the headteacher's leadership, the staff have worked together to halt the decline in the school's fortunes and turn a satisfactory school into one that is now held in high esteem by parents and the community. 'This is a very special school. We all want the best for our children and St Mary's gives that for each and every child. It is led kindly and proficiently by a wonderful headteacher and nurtured and supported by a dedicated and caring staff. The whole child is loved and appreciated – their talents and idiosyncrasies. My son is thriving and happy – what more could I ask?' This comment from one of the parents reflects the views of the majority and is rightly placed.

The school is making a good contribution to community cohesion. This is achieved within the context of a strong Christian community where pupils learn to respect themselves and others and become successful learners who are able to take their place confidently in the 21st Century. Pupils from different home, cultural and religious backgrounds are warmly welcomed into the school community and all get on well together. Staff are extremely vigilant in identifying the needs of each pupil very carefully and they provide highly effective support. The school promotes pupils' love of learning very effectively, as well as their understanding of how to stay healthy, keep themselves and others safe and become reliable, caring members of their school, local, national and global community.

Leaders monitor all aspects of the school's provision rigorously. This ensures that teaching and the curriculum are consistently challenging and of the highest quality, and that pupils are constantly immersed in a boundless range of rich and exciting experiences both in and out of the classroom. Assessment and recording systems provide teachers and managers with a detailed picture of what needs to be done to fill gaps in pupils' learning, accelerate progress and ensure pupils reach the highest standards they can.

Pupils flourish in this excellent, carefully planned environment. Children start school with levels of development that are well below those expected for their ages. All pupils work very hard and their progress is outstanding. By Year 2 pupils reach broadly average standards. By Year 6 standards are above average and the school exceeds its own challenging targets. Pupils' achievement is outstanding.

The school has made excellent progress since the previous inspection. However, the school's management structure does not reflect the school's increasing size and as a result, the headteacher carries a very heavy load of responsibilities. The school has a very accurate insight into its strengths and weaknesses and is constantly looking for new challenges to enhance the education of its pupils. The success of its actions shows that the school is exceptionally well placed to continue to be very successful.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Most children enter the school with skills and abilities which are well below those typically expected for their age especially in the basic skills of speaking, listening reading, writing and counting and personal development. Once children are immersed in the exciting learning

environment they make very significant gains. By the time children reach the end of the Reception Year children are reaching the levels in the early learning goals below those expected for their age. The high quality of leadership and management ensures that staff provide interesting and exciting tasks and activities that are well planned to address children's needs and that the welfare of the children is promoted very effectively. Children enjoy the many opportunities to explore, investigate and learn new skills, often following a theme. There is a very good balance between activities where children discover things for themselves and those where they work with an adult. Basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy are woven imaginatively into tasks and, as a result, children are becoming increasingly confident with letters, sounds and numbers. Assessment systems are very effective in helping staff to pinpoint each child's progress and carefully identify the next steps in learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop a leadership structure that better reflects the increasing size of the school and the range of management responsibilities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Despite the substantial gains they make in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils' attainment on entry to Year 1 is usually below average. In response to the consistently high quality teaching they receive, pupils make good progress and achieve exceptionally well in Key Stages 1 and 2. In the 2008 teacher assessments at the end of Year 2, standards were broadly average. Standards in the present Year 2 are not as high as in 2008 as this is a much lower attaining cohort but pupils are making good progress and achieving well. Pupils continue to work very hard and achieve exceptionally well in Key Stage 2. In the latest provisional results for 2008, every pupil who took the test reached the expected level in reading, writing mathematics and science; 40% reached the higher level in reading and mathematics; 20% reached the higher levels in writing; and 60% reached the higher level in science. As a result of very well targeted interventions, standards across the school have improved significantly since the previous inspection especially in writing. Pupils in the current Year 6 are reaching similarly high standards in English, mathematics and science, and the school is on course to meet its challenging targets. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress towards the targets set for their learning and frequently achieve the expected levels for their ages and abilities. The very few pupils from minority ethnic heritages, including those who have English as an additional language, achieve well and reach similar standards to their peers as do the significant number of pupils who arrive at the school at different times during the school year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are exceptionally polite, friendly and well behaved because they realise this makes living in a community so much easier. Pupils are regular attenders, show considerable enthusiasm in their lessons and are eager to share ideas or explain a difficult task to their classmates. Pupils are learning to be very good citizens. They are helpful, friendly and caring around school responding with enthusiasm to the many opportunities to take on responsibility, such as being buddies, play leaders or house captains. They care for their environment and have a very good knowledge of how to keep healthy and safe. Pupils enjoy performing their music and drama to

local groups; a recent history project which turned the whole school into a museum further developed pupils' understanding of what it means to belong to a community. Through first-hand experiences of other cultures and faiths and strong links with schools in Japan and Africa they are learning to think of their place in the world community. Pupils talk with great maturity about the importance of respecting people different from themselves. Learning another language whether as part of a French lesson or learning a few words of Polish to communicate with a newcomer to their school is seen as an important way of getting on with others. Attendance is good. Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is outstanding and enables pupils to achieve as well as they can. Classrooms, corridors, shared areas and outdoor facilities create an exciting learning environment for pupils to explore. Displays remind pupils of what they need to do to be successful readers, writers and mathematicians. Tasks and experiences are exceptionally well matched to the different abilities, ages and interests in each class and group. They bring relevance and enjoyment and high levels of challenge to learning across the school. A challenging mathematics lesson about mode, mean and median in Years 5 and 6 was made so much more fun and learning was much more rapid because pupils were using data about their own much loved football teams. In Years 1 and 2, learning how to become better writers was much more exciting when it was the work of 'that infamous imaginary friend, Bert!' Teaching assistants are highly skilled and work very effectively to raise standards for pupils of all abilities and with different needs. Teachers use information from day to day assessments and tests to pinpoint each pupil's progress and carefully identify the next steps in learning. The marking of pupils' work is very precise in helping pupils to improve. Innovative practices such as the use of the 'flip' video recorder not only helps teachers to assess pupils' attainment but involves even the youngest of pupils in understanding how they can improve their own learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum is vibrant, varied and extremely well suited to the needs of pupils. The excellent emphasis on teaching the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology through well planned and exciting topics which appeal to different interests is successful in enabling all pupils to reach the highest standards they can. In addition, the programme for learning outdoors provides pupils with the opportunity to develop a very positive attitude to challenge and adventure. A wide range of flexible approaches are taken to encourage the learning of particular individuals and groups. More able pupils attend sessions at the high school and where there are major gaps in pupils' learning consideration is given to them remaining with a lower age group for a period of time. An excellent programme of social and health education permeates all lessons and activities and provides the pupils with the necessary tools to develop personal safety, care and healthy living. Out of school clubs, visits and visitors to school abound, enriching pupils' learning and personal skills. This innovative curriculum is highly successful in equipping pupils exceptionally well for their future role as responsible citizens and in promoting their economic well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's outstanding level of care, guidance and support enables all pupils to be highly successful learners. Procedures for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety are in line with statutory requirements. Highly skilled support staff and specialist teachers work with a wide range of outside agencies to provide additional support to enable pupils to make the progress they are capable of. This includes those who transfer to the school at different times of the school year and who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or who are learning English as an additional language. As a result of the excellent support they receive, these pupils invariably catch up quickly with their classmates, reaching the expected standards for their ages. Parents are particularly appreciative of this aspect of the school's work, valuing the speed with which their children learn English, learn to read, write and count, or are simply happy to come to school. The guidance given to pupils about what they should do to improve is excellent. Targets are clearly written for all subjects in a form which even the youngest pupils can easily understand.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Clearly focused leadership and management and a strong sense of purpose ensure that the school provides pupils with the confidence and will to succeed. The headteacher has worked alongside a new team of teachers building up their confidence, self-esteem and professional skills. Every member of staff plays a vital part in ensuring that developed systems are robust. Assessments, test results, the quality of the teaching and learning and the curriculum are all monitored and evaluated to ensure that pupils' learning is exciting and relevant, their progress accelerates and every pupil reaches the highest standard they are capable of whatever their starting points. The school's leadership works with a wide range of agencies both local and national to ensure the school is at the forefront of any initiatives which will further improve the provision for its pupils. The school's success is evidenced by its rapidly rising standards and increasing numbers on roll. However, the leadership structure does not yet reflect the size of the school and the headteacher carries a wide range of responsibilities. Governors are exceptionally supportive of the school and have wisely allocated substantial funds which have ensured that the school is well resourced and is fit for education in the 21st Century. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. This is a highly inclusive school and the headteacher and governors are very clear about the great value that pupils of all abilities and backgrounds bring to the school.

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

| | |
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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 1 |
| 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? | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 1 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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|---|---|
| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 1 |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve? | 1 |
| 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? | 1 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 1 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 1 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 1 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 1 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress | 1 |

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

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|---|---|
| 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 | 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 | 1 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs? | 1 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 1 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 1 |

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 1 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 1 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 1 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 1 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 2 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 1 |
| 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**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Haslingden, Lancashire, BB4 5NP

Thank you so much for being so friendly and welcoming when I inspected your school a short while ago. I really enjoyed talking to you. Do you remember when I asked some of you what you thought of your school and you said it was 'near perfect'? Well, I am pleased to tell you that I agree with you. In fact I think it is an outstanding school. I am also pleased to say that your parents and carers think it is an excellent school as well. Here are some of the things I especially liked about your school.

- It was so good to see how very well behaved and polite you are. I was especially pleased to see how much you enjoy your lessons and how eager you all are to learn new things.
- I could see by the work in your books and displays around the school that you are all doing so well in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The work you do in other subjects is also of a very high standard. I especially liked the work you do in topics such as pirates and special history and geography projects. They sound so interesting and you seem to learn so much from them.
- You work hard in lessons and you know how to improve your work. I especially liked the way you keep looking at your targets to check your work.
- I was also very pleased to see that you are becoming very responsible young citizens who are aware of the importance of respecting other people that have different traditions and religions. You are also very welcoming to new children who join your school.
- You know the importance of protecting the environment, eating sensible food and taking lots of exercise. Do keep that up because it is so important to staying healthy and happy.

You go to an excellent school. I have asked the headteacher to make sure that the school is organised so that it can continue to meet all of your needs now that there are more pupils at the school. Do remember to always work really hard and learn lots and lots of new and exciting things. I hope you will continue to enjoy school as much as you do now and that it will help you to become happy and successful adults.

Yours sincerely

Carole Cressey

Lead inspector