

Our Lady of Mount Carmel RC Primary School, Ashton-under-Lyne

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131285
Local Authority	Tameside
Inspection number	328577
Inspection date	5 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Julie Price Grimshaw

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	218
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 Andrew Lawlor
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Brown
Date of previous school inspection	3 April 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Holden Street Ashton-under-Lyne Lancashire OL6 9JJ
Telephone number	0161 330 9521
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: how effectively the school is responding to the challenges presented by the recent increase in the proportion of pupils who are at the early stages of learning English; the extent to which the issues related to the Early Years Foundation Stage, raised at the previous inspection, have been addressed; how well the school promotes community cohesion and pupils' cultural development. Evidence was gathered from: national published assessment data and the school's own records; scrutiny of pupils' work, a range of school documentation and parents' questionnaires; observations of the school at work; discussions with staff, pupils and members of the governing body. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school serving a mixed socio-economic area. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is just above average and has increased recently as a significant number of pupils from Eastern Europe have joined the school. Almost all of these pupils are at the very early stages of learning English.

There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision in the Nursery and Reception classes. The school is undergoing building work, which is temporarily affecting the provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The school has received the Healthy Schools, Activemark and ECO Green Flag International awards.

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 that cares for its pupils exceptionally well. As a result, their personal development is outstanding. Pupils are confident and happy young people who love coming to school and show genuine enthusiasm for learning. They are very caring towards one another and welcome new pupils into the school community. This is evident in comments such as, 'we look after our new friends and make sure that they feel like part of our family'. Parents, too, are keen to comment on, 'the caring, friendly and safe environment', and, 'exceptional family atmosphere'.

For some years, children's skills on joining the Early Years Foundation Stage have been broadly in line with typical expectations. However, recent evidence shows that some children are now joining with less well developed skills, particularly in relation to their personal and social development. Pupils achieve well and they make good progress throughout the school to reach standards that are above average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Since the previous inspection, test results have reflected a rising trend overall. Teachers aim to make sure that the most able pupils are consistently challenged, and as a result, the proportion reaching the higher levels in English and science is above average. Similarly, the high quality guidance provided by confident and capable support staff is a key factor in ensuring that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. The school is very swift to respond to the needs of new pupils from Eastern Europe who are at the very early stages of learning English. Outstanding quality pastoral care combined with extremely effective language support results in these pupils making excellent progress, particularly with their spoken and written English.

Pupils are proud of their school and make an outstanding contribution to the school and local communities. Members of the eco-committee are active in representing the views of their fellow pupils, and peer support workers play a prominent role in caring for younger pupils and those who are new to the school. Their fundraising efforts benefit local, national and international charities. The school ensures that pupils develop a very thorough awareness of how to stay safe; for example, pupils speak with confidence about road safety, fire safety and sensible use of the Internet. Sporting activities feature strongly in the curriculum, and pupils take advantage of the opportunities to take part in regular physical exercise. They also have a thorough understanding of healthy eating, speaking with confidence about the importance of 'cutting down on saturated fats'. Although opportunities for engagement in enterprise activities are limited, good basic skills and excellent social development mean that pupils are well prepared for their future lives.

Teaching and learning are consistently good, and there is some outstanding classroom practice. Lessons typically move at a brisk pace, and classrooms are often hives of activity where pupils enjoy learning through interesting and varied practical activities. Teachers use information and communication technology effectively to enhance learning. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Tasks are effectively matched to pupils' abilities. Books are marked thoroughly, so pupils know exactly what they need to do in order to improve. In outstanding lessons, work is very precisely tailored to pupils' needs. Teachers' summaries at the end of lessons are used very well in order to consolidate learning. Staff have very high expectations and inspire pupils, encouraging them to seek challenge, which leads to outstanding progress in these excellent lessons.

Since the last inspection, there have been considerable improvements to procedures for tracking pupils' progress, which now mean that academic guidance is a strength of the school's work. Pupils have individual targets, including one linked to their personal development, and are motivated to achieve these. Effective use of assessment data enables staff to identify any underachievement and to respond appropriately. All safeguarding requirements are met.

The good quality curriculum meets the needs of all, matching the full range of pupils' abilities and aspirations. Subjects are linked effectively, and there are opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. Spiritual and cultural development is promoted very well and as a result, pupils have excellent awareness of faiths and cultures other than their own. A good range of enrichment activities enhance the curriculum and support pupils' personal development well.

The quality of leadership and management is good overall. The headteacher and other senior managers lead the school well. They have addressed issues identified at the previous inspection and are now striving to take the school further. However, middle leaders are not fully involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's work, and the school recognises that there is scope for developing their roles to enable all leaders to contribute to further improvement. Staff ensure that this is a very inclusive school where equality of opportunity is of the utmost importance. The school promotes community cohesion well by ensuring that pupils develop awareness of the diversity within their local community and the country as a whole. Eco work supports pupils' understanding of issues relating to the global community.

Governance has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Governors have undertaken recent training in order to develop their skills and to increase their awareness and understanding. They are fully committed to the school and provide good quality support and challenge. The school has an accurate overview of its strengths and weaknesses and is well placed for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Building work is underway with the aim of providing a high quality Early Years Foundation Stage environment, including a well resourced outdoor area. Although this work is creating some disruption, staff are making the best of the situation, and as a result of their work, children make good progress throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. Learning is carefully planned through a wide range of activities. These encourage children to work independently, as well as developing their social skills well. In the Nursery, displays of children's writing from September, alongside recent work, help them to see how much their skills have developed. Home/school books keep parents fully informed of the progress their children are making. In the Reception class, staff are responsive to circumstances and make the most of opportunities to promote learning. For example, snowfall led to discussions of the weather, with children making their own books entitled 'On a winter's day'.

They were intrigued to see how a jug full of powdery snow melted to become a small quantity of water. Children's learning is observed on a regular basis, with the Nursery staff focusing on six different 'VIPs' every week; parents are informed of this and are encouraged to take an active interest in their children's assessment. Welfare requirements are fully met. The Nursery and Reception classes are currently located in different parts of the school and this presents challenges for collaborative work. As the school plans for future operation as an Early Years

Foundation Stage unit, there is scope for establishing greater coherence across the Nursery and Reception classes. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the roles of middle managers so that they play a full role in promoting continuous improvement.
- Build on improvements made to the Early Years Foundation Stage in establishing closer links and greater coherence between the Nursery and Reception classes.

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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?	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?	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	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?	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?	1

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	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**

As you know, I visited your school recently together with another inspector so that we could find out how well you are doing. I would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome and for sharing your views with us. I would also like to share our main findings with you.

Our Lady's is a good school and some features of its work are outstanding. You told us that it was like a big family where everyone cared for one another, and we could see that this is true. The staff provide excellent care for you; they want you to be happy and confident, and to achieve really well. We could see that their work has paid off; we were so impressed with your excellent behaviour, in particular, the way in which you care for each other, including those who are new to the school. The eco-committee sounded really good, and the peer supporters do some fantastic work. You obviously enjoy all the sporting activities on offer and you know so much about healthy eating!

We visited your lessons and could see that you were enjoying yourselves. I know now what you meant when you said that the teachers work hard to make learning fun! You make good progress at Our Lady's and the test results in English, mathematics and science have improved over the past few years. By Year 6, standards are above average. The staff give really good support to those pupils who are just starting to learn English and these pupils do really well with their work.

I have suggested two things that your school could do to be even better. The senior staff work hard to make sure your school is improving all the time and I think that some of the staff who have special responsibilities might support them more in this work. Also, you will have noticed the building work around the Nursery and Reception areas; these classes are hoping to work together much more closely in the future, so we have asked them to think about how they can start to work towards this now.