

St Catherine's C E Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132785
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	328678
Inspection date	28 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Geoffrey Yates

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)	252
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 D Clayton-Baker
Headteacher	Mrs K Graham
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Greenstone Avenue Horwich Bolton BL6 5SJ
Telephone number	01204 332 636
Fax number	01204 332 637

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: whether pupils are achieving as well as they can; the school's use of assessment data; the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The inspectors gathered evidence from lesson observations, looking at pupils' work,

assessment information, documents, interviews and discussions with the headteacher, staff, pupils, parents and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected 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. The other judgements have been included, where appropriate, in this report.

Description of the school

This average size primary school serves an area of mostly private housing some distance from the town centre of Horwich. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those eligible for free school meals are below average. A well below average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language and there are no pupils at a very early stage of learning to speak English. The school has achieved many awards including Healthy Eating awards and Eco awards. The headteacher took up her post at the start of the autumn term 2008.

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 where pupils achieve well. The school successfully nurtures an ethos of self-respect and respect for others, and this is central to its happy and effective learning community. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. This is because of the effective way in which the curriculum promotes pupils' personal development. All pupils are made to feel special and very welcome. If pupils need additional support, they receive it. For example, the school has recently employed five extra teaching assistants to support pupils in their learning. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary both in lessons and around the school. The new headteacher provides strong leadership firmly based on providing what is best for the children. Many parents express their high levels of satisfaction with the school and typical parent comments include, 'I can't believe how much my child has learned since he started school. I am dreading the day that he leaves! I wouldn't want my child to go to another school.'

Pupils enter Year 1 with average skills for their age. For a number of years they have left the school in Year 6 with above average standards in English, mathematics and science, both at the expected and at the higher levels. However, the 2008 provisional assessment data indicates a drop in standards in all three subject areas. Disruptions in staffing were a key reason for this decline. The school has compelling evidence to show that current overall standards of attainment are back to above the expected levels, representing pupils' good progress and good achievement. The small numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making good progress against the targets set out in their individual education plans. In all age groups across the school, there are clear signs of good achievement. However, as recognised by the school, standards in writing in Key Stage 1 are below the expected level.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils achieve and learn well because of the good teaching that they receive and the outstanding attitudes they bring to their work. Lessons are characterised by excellent relationships and clear expectations. There is usually a high degree of challenge in the tasks teachers set, particularly for more able pupils although, occasionally, teachers direct pupils' work too much. In the lessons observed, pupils were enthusiastic about their work and keen to talk about what they were doing. The newly appointed teaching assistants offer good support. As a result, pupils of all attainment levels achieve well.

The good quality curriculum is in the process of developing further as teachers make increasingly good links between subjects. Many curricular opportunities have a very good impact on pupils' personal development. For example, in Year 5 pupils develop a good awareness of the need to preserve the environment and they write poetry of a good quality to express their views. Music provision is not forgotten and pupils respond exceedingly well to the singing sessions led by a visiting specialist teacher. However, in all classrooms the lack of a good range of information and communication technology (ICT) resources limits opportunities for pupils to use ICT throughout the curriculum. There are some good examples of pupils using their writing and numeracy skills well in other subjects. After school clubs provide good curricular support.

The school ethos encourages pupils to become caring and responsible young people. Pupils greatly enjoy coming to school and their attendance is above average. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is good overall. Their cultural development and the school's promotion of community cohesion are satisfactory, since pupils' understanding of the great variety of cultures in Britain and the wider world is not as strong as their understanding of their own culture. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and local community. They are

proud to be members of the school council or Eco group and look forward to finding out who has won the 'Reach for the stars awards'. The school's participation in a training choir with pupils from a number of schools is a good example of their community involvement. Pupils show an excellent understanding of healthy eating and the need for regular exercise. They say that they feel very safe in school. This is not surprising given the exceptionally high quality of pastoral care they receive. The overall quality of care, guidance and support, including the academic guidance provided for pupils, is good. Safeguarding procedures fully comply with requirements.

Good leadership and management underpin all aspects of the school's work. The headteacher has quickly and accurately identified what needs to be done to move the school on even further and, importantly, has taken steps to do so. For example, she has worked successfully in ensuring that assessment data about pupils' progress is organised into a coherent, consistent and easily understood tracking system. More than that, she has ensured that the information is starting to be used effectively across the school to ensure pupils make the progress they should. The creation of two parents' and pupils' panels provides both groups with a forum where they can express their views about what they would like to happen in school. One member of the parents' panel commented, 'The headteacher has exceptional qualities and is perfect for Saint Catherine's.' Senior and middle leaders offer good support. The issue from the previous inspection with regard to increased governor involvement has only recently been addressed. As a result, governors are now developing their role soundly as the school's critical friends. The school's self-evaluation is accurate, it provides good value for money and has good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in a Nursery that provides a vibrant child-friendly learning environment. Children's skills on entry vary somewhat, but are generally below those typical for their age. By the time pupils enter Year 1 their achievement is good and children's skills are broadly as expected for their age. The children's safety and welfare are maintained at all times. Their personal development is excellent because arrangements for their personal welfare are so strong. Activities are closely matched to the requirements for each area of learning, and are carefully planned to take place both indoors and outdoors. However, the outside area provides more effectively for children's learning experiences in the Nursery than in the Reception class. Teaching and learning are of a good quality, as is overall leadership and management. Activities are usually well balanced between teacher-led sessions and purposeful opportunities for children to work on their own. However, in the Reception class adults sometimes ask children who are well into an activity, to stop and listen to what another group of children has been doing. This takes them unnecessarily away from their tasks. Well taught sessions on letters and sounds ensure the early stages of reading are grasped thoroughly. Staff effectively base their planning of the next steps in children's learning on the assessment and tracking of their progress. Parents are justifiably delighted with the Early Years Foundation Stage.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing in Key Stage 1.

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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?	1
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	2
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	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	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?	3
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	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**

What a good school you attend!

Thank you for helping my colleague and me when we recently visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and finding out about your school. It provides you with a good education and that you do some very exciting things. I particularly enjoyed watching the singing lesson and talking to you about your work. We agree with your parents that your school is a very happy place.

These are the things that are particularly strong in your school:

- your headteacher provides good leadership and management
- throughout the school, your teachers have high expectations and very clear ideas of how to bring about improvements
- you make good progress in all classes and your work is above average by Year 6
- you are all developing excellent attitudes towards your work and towards each other
- you are very polite and your behaviour is excellent
- all members of staff look after and care for you exceptionally well.

To help make your school even better, we have asked your headteacher and governors to make sure that teachers support pupils in Years 1 and 2 to improve the standard of their writing.

Very best wishes