

St Antony's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119516
Local Authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	339460
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Lynne Read

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Julie Georgy
Headteacher	Mrs Elaine Grimshaw
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons and observed teaching in all classes. They held meetings with governors, managers, other staff, groups of pupils and the School Improvement Partner. In observing the school's work, they looked at pupils' workbooks, assessment records, the school's policies and development plans. In total, 77 questionnaires from parents and carers were analysed, alongside 100 questionnaires completed by pupils.

- whether the recent improvements in pupils' achievement at Key Stage 1 are sustainable
- whether achievement in Key Stage 2 has improved
- The capacity for managers to sustain improvements and drive the school forward.

Information about the school

This average-sized primary school serves an urban area. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is more than double the national average. Around 15% of pupils belong to minority ethnic groups with a very small proportion in the early stages of speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools and Sports Partnership awards. The Nursery children attend part time in the mornings and share the Early Years Foundation Stage unit with the Reception children. The governing body provides extended care on the premises through a breakfast club.

Since the previous inspection the school has experienced a turbulent time with changes in management. At the time of inspection an associate headteacher was in post and some senior managers were on temporary contracts.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the governing body's leadership and management in shaping the direction of the school and ensuring that it has the capacity for sustained improvement. The vast majority of the other aspects of the school's work are at least satisfactory and some are good.

St Antony's provides an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. Care and welfare are strengths at the heart of the school's work and result in pupils' good personal development. Under the very effective leadership of the associate headteacher, many important changes have been made in management, teaching and the curriculum. These have resulted in improved achievement and higher standards. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress. By Year 6 attainment is close to average overall, although at the higher level it is below average in writing and mathematics. The legacy of underachievement is being systematically eliminated: pupils are catching up quickly. Pupils who speak English as an additional language do as well as their classmates. Behaviour is good and pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance is in line with the national average and above that of similar schools. Pupils assert that they feel safe and that any incidence of bullying is dealt with swiftly. Spiritual development is supported well through the school's Christian values. Pupils have a good awareness of moral and social issues and show respect for cultures and beliefs that are different from their own. These factors underpin the harmonious relationships among the different ethnic and religious groups. However, the school is not effectively promoting community cohesion beyond the school.

Teaching has a satisfactory impact on learning overall and some is good. Teachers have raised expectations of what pupils can achieve and most lessons are carefully planned to meet pupils' needs. There are occasions, however, when the work does not challenge all groups, in particular the more able. In some instances, pupils have insufficient time or opportunity to write independently. Good measures are taken to secure expert help to meet pupils' learning and personal needs, especially for those who are potentially vulnerable. Senior and middle managers constantly monitor provision and performance. Their evaluations inform the school's improvement planning and the leadership team ensures that issues are tackled swiftly. The governors' monitoring systems provide them with a general overview of the school's work. However, the statutory requirement for them to provide a Nursery teacher is not met. In order to secure the drive for

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improvement and provide continuity in leadership, the school and local authority were working on a fixed-term partnership project. Plans have been abandoned due to lack of support from the governing body. Consequently, the school faces an uncertain future at the end of this academic year. The good improvements made over the last two years are fragile and there are no contingency plans to ensure continuity in the pace of improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By January 2011 improve the role of the governing body in shaping the direction of the school, specifically ensuring that it has the leadership it needs to secure the improvements already made and to implement its development plans successfully.
- Ensure that all statutory requirements are met by providing a teacher for the Nursery by September 2010.
- By 2011 improve attainment and achievement by:
 - – Ensuring that all lessons include sufficient challenge for pupils, in particular for the more able in English and mathematics.
- Extend the positive work done on community cohesion in the school, to the wider community and beyond by 2011.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Achievement is satisfactory overall and good for some groups. On entry to Year 1 pupils' attainment is close to that typically expected but is weaker in early reading, writing and some mathematical skills. In Key Stage 1 learning has improved and is often good, resulting in average attainment for the pupils in the current Year 2.

An increased emphasis on learning about sounds and letters is helping to boost reading skills and 'every child counts' sessions help to improve confidence in mathematics. The pace of learning has accelerated considerably in Key Stage 2. Intervention groups and individual tuition are boosting progress and pupils are catching up fast. By Year 6 the proportion of pupils working at the expected level is broadly average but too few are working at the higher level in mathematics and writing. Good specialist knowledge among teachers and teaching assistant's supports pupils' individual needs well. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress towards their individual targets and have good self-esteem. Girls and boys from the different ethnic groups make equal progress.

Pupils say they enjoy school and feel safe and happy. They know that the school does not tolerate any form of harassment or racism. Behaviour is good and underpins pupils' learning. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy living and enjoy plenty of exercise. They learn about life skills through the curriculum and are actively involved in fundraising events. As a consequence, they are soundly prepared for their future education and world of work. Good opportunities exist for pupils to experience responsibility. For example, play leaders and school councillors contribute much to the day-to-day running of school and to the process of decision making.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have improved their skills in assessing pupils' work and planning the next steps. Lessons usually have good pace and include work to cater for the different ability groups. However, on occasions, there is insufficient challenge, especially for the more able. Teachers consistently make the purpose of the lesson clear so pupils know what is expected of them. Marking includes helpful advice and pupils have useful targets for learning so they know where to focus their efforts. Teaching assistants have good expertise and are deployed well to provide additional support, in class and group sessions.

A strength of the curriculum lies in the tailoring of tasks and support to help pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or who are not meeting the expected targets. A range of intervention programmes, together with individual tuition, provide very good support for personal, academic and language development. Similar provision for the gifted and more-able pupils is in the early stages. Pupils say they especially enjoy their 'super learning days' when the whole school focuses on a theme, such as countries around the world or famous people. Skills in information and communication technology

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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are extended well through other subjects, although opportunities for writing and numeracy are not always exploited to the full. Pupils take good advantage of an interesting programme of before- and after-school clubs and competitive sport.

Welfare arrangements are good and responses to questionnaires from pupils, and parents and carers, overwhelmingly agree that children are safe in school. Inter-agency work and a special weekend club support pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, and their families, well. Good links with secondary schools ensure that pupils have a smooth transition to the next phase of education. Measures taken to improve attendance have been very successful. They have drastically reduced the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent and raised attendance from below average. The breakfast club provides a good start to the day and encourages punctuality for those that use it.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The associate headteacher provides focused, determined leadership and strong direction for the school. A new structure to the senior management team enables improvements to be made at a good pace. Expert advice has been secured to help enhance the skills of teachers and managers and good use is made of advice from the local authority. The morale of staff is good and all share the ambitious agenda for success. Managers check the quality of lessons and work, and pupils' progress is tracked closely. Detailed assessment records enable staff to identify any pupil who is not making the expected progress and swift action is taken to remedy the problem. This is a key factor underpinning pupils' improved progress and attainment. Procedures and policies are consistently followed and the school gives satisfactory value for money.

Safeguarding, including safe recruitment and child protection, is given a high priority and all requirements are fully met. Staff have regular updates in their child protection training and are well equipped to deal with any concerns. The school's equality policy is followed in practice and regularly evaluated to minimise any barriers to learning. Some good partnerships with outside agencies bring benefits to pupils' education. For example, coaches from the local football club lead sports sessions and the Countryside Trust provides visits and experiences to broaden pupils' horizons. Parents and carers are encouraged to be partners in their children's education and regularly receive newsletters and information about the curriculum. Community cohesion is effective within school but

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work within the local, national and global contexts is not established. There have been some differences of opinion between governors, the local authority and managers. The decision-making process surrounding the proposed partnership project was not informed by sufficient formal consultation with parents and carers or staff. Uncertainty surrounds the future leadership at the school from September 2010, when the temporary appointments of the headteacher and some senior leaders come to an end. Governance is therefore inadequate in determining the strategic direction of the school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's development on entry to the Nursery is mostly below that typically expected and at times well below in personal development, language and communication. The lack of a Nursery teacher breaches requirements but is not having an impact on children's learning at the moment. This is because staff are experienced and the Reception teacher ensures that planning and provision meet all children's needs. However, the provision is not secure because governors have not taken action to ensure that a Nursery teacher is in place. The two classes share a stimulating learning environment, with the younger ones deriving many benefits from working alongside the Reception children. For example, the older children help with routines and inspire the younger ones to try something new. Good use is made of assessment to plan focused group sessions that build carefully on children's developing skills. Teaching is of good quality and tasks include varied opportunities for children to choose activities, explore their world and develop independence. A well-chosen range of resources is used to create imaginative experiences. As a result, children make good progress. By the time

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they enter Year 1 they are mostly working close to expected levels, but early writing and mathematical skills are overall just below that expected of their age. Staff are currently devoting extra attention to these areas. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Strong teamwork ensures that routines, policies and procedures are consistently followed and ensures a good level of welfare. Leaders have secure knowledge of the guidance and requirements of this age group but the issues regarding the staffing of the Nursery class have been left unaddressed.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Around one third of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. They have positive views and the very large majority are happy with their children's experience at the school. Quotes that reflect these views include, 'The teachers and staff are all very helpful,' and, 'The teachers work very hard to bring out the best in each child.' The vast majority of parents and carers are pleased with the quality of teaching, especially the school's efforts in meeting individuals' needs. Inspectors agree with these views although the higher attainers are not always fully challenged. Some parents and carers raised concerns about their children's progress, which is understandable, considering the underachievement at the school in the past. Inspectors judge that this situation is improving and that pupils make at least satisfactory progress. Many parents and carers also praised leadership and management. However inspectors found that governance is inadequate in shaping the direction of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Antony's RC Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 77 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 202 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	46	57	33	41	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	53	65	25	31	2	2	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	38	47	41	51	1	1	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	44	39	48	6	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	41	51	36	44	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	38	47	40	49	2	2	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	48	37	46	4	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	40	49	37	46	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	43	42	52	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	35	44	54	3	4	4	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	38	42	52	5	6	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	42	52	38	47	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	50	62	28	35	3	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



30 April 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Antony's RC Primary School, Blackburn, BB1 2HP

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave the inspectors when we came to your school. We thoroughly enjoyed our time with you and appreciated all the help you gave us. I would like to tell you what we found out.

There are some things about St Antony's Primary that are satisfactory or good. For example it is a happy and safe school and you all get on very well together. The staff care for you well. You are making better progress now than in the recent past and the standard of your work is broadly average. Those of you who receive extra help and those of you in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress. We saw how well you get on together and your good behaviour creates a pleasant atmosphere for learning. You have a good understanding about how to stay safe and healthy.

However, there are some serious questions about your school's ability to continue to make improvements. Some plans were drawn up for the future but these will not now be implemented. As a result, it is uncertain who will lead your school from September 2010. The school has therefore been given a 'notice to improve'. Inspectors will visit again to check on the situation and see if the school is continuing to move forward quickly.

There are some other points for improvement. We judge that the school should extend the good community work at St Antony's into the locality so that you can learn more about how people live their lives, in this and other countries. You are keen to learn and work hard, but you could be making better progress in mathematics and writing especially for those of you who learn quickly. Lastly, the Nursery children should have their own specialist teacher.

You can all help by continuing to work hard and being keen to learn. Thank you once again for the interesting conversations we had and for letting us share your work and play. Please accept my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Lynne Read

Lead inspector

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