

St Mary and Michael Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119617
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	358593
Inspection dates	15–16 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Geoffrey Yates

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Roger Mason
Headteacher	Mrs Cathryn Wilkinson
Date of previous school inspection	12 December 2007
School address	Castle Lane Garstang Preston PR3 1RB
Telephone number	01995 603023
Fax number	01995 600075
Email address	head@st-mary-michael.lancs.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
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Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 1234 234

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Seven lessons were observed, taught by five teachers. The inspectors held meetings with a governor, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at the tracking of pupils' progress and the school's monitoring, self-evaluation and planning for improvement. The inspectors also analysed 92 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the degree to which pupils make consistent progress as they move through the school
- how effective is the Early Years Foundation Stage
- how well assessment information is used
- how well the school meets the personal needs of its pupils.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average size school in which the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, while the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. The school has gained many awards, including Eco Green Flag status.

There is educational provision for pupils under the age of four on the school site and an independently run after-school club. These are not managed by the school, have been inspected recently and do not form part of this inspection.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school has an accurate and well-deserved reputation as a good school. There is an outstanding ethos of care and support and as a result, pupils develop into mature and thoughtful individuals. They behave outstandingly well and have an excellent understanding of the importance of safeguarding issues. Pupils' above average attendance demonstrates that they enjoy school. A dip in pupils' progress in 2009 was analysed and measures put in place to improve provision. Consequently, provisional test results in English and mathematics for Year 6 pupils leaving the school in 2010 are indicated as well above average, with pupils making good progress throughout the school. The current picture shows this improvement has been maintained. Parents and carers hold the school in high regard. One parent expressed the views of many, 'A great school with a family ethos.' There are some outstanding partnerships with other organisations in promoting pupils' learning.

The majority of children start school with skills typical for their age. They make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and exceed national expectations by the time they enter Year 1. Across the rest of the school they make good progress and all groups of pupils achieve well. Systems for tracking pupils' progress are efficient and continue to be refined. However, the information gathered is not used consistently to set precise individual targets for pupils.

Teaching and learning are good overall. Strong features include good use made of support staff, well-planned activities and a very positive climate for learning. Where teaching is outstanding, pupils are constantly challenged to explain their thinking, and respond exceedingly well. While teachers do mark pupils' work regularly, opportunities are missed to provide pointers for improvement. The curriculum is of a good quality overall, with well-planned activities permeating the whole curriculum. For example, high quality art work is linked effectively to other areas of the curriculum. However, opportunities are missed for pupils to use and develop their writing skills in subjects across the curriculum.

Leadership and management are good. The school has a good capacity to improve. This is because its self-evaluation is very robust and the school is outstandingly and energetically led by the headteacher, with the good support of all the staff. As a result, there are effective plans to bring about further improvements, which are already well underway.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the improvements already made in improving the quality of pupils' writing,

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by ensuring that pupils are given plenty of opportunities to use their writing skills in work across subject areas.

- Ensure consistency in the quality of marking and in the setting of individual targets, so that pupils always have a clear view of what they need to do to improve.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils achieve well, have very good attitudes and really enjoy learning. Having entered the school with skills that are broadly expected for their age, pupils make good overall progress through the school. They have a good commitment to the tasks in hand and work at a good pace. Pupils work well with a partner or in a group, listen carefully to teachers' instructions, behave outstandingly well and are keen to make a positive response. Pupils talk with great enthusiasm about the work they do in school, but some are less confident when asked about what targets they have in order to help them improve further. All groups of pupils make good progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Attainment in writing has fluctuated slightly over the past three years, but the most recent provisional national test results show standards in English and mathematics are again well above average. Work seen in lessons and the school's own assessments, confirm that pupils' attainment in the current Year 6 is above average in English and mathematics, with higher attainers achieving well. While the school's focus on developing pupils' writing skills has been successful, it recognises the need to maintain this momentum. Work in pupils' literacy books offers clear examples of good quality creative writing, but this is not as evident in other subjects.

The school's highly positive ethos leads to a strong sense of commitment to the school community and consideration for others. Pupils develop strong team-working skills when sharing resources and are enthusiastic in celebrating each other's achievements. For example, pupils are keen to 'earn' the 'star of the week award'. Pupils are very keen to take on roles and responsibilities so there are few aspects of school life where they do not play an active part. For example, they help in the school's well-developed garden area and are proud to have gained a food hygiene award that qualifies them to act as appropriately dressed 'salad server' at lunchtime. The pupils feel extremely safe and very well cared for at school. They have great confidence that the staff will help them if they have any difficulties. Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lives and there is a high uptake in the school's sports activities.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers make good use of their good subject knowledge to generate lively and relevant lessons. Excellent relationships and a brisk pace in most lessons, ensure that pupils get the most out their learning. While teaching is of a good quality, there are examples of outstanding teaching. Where this occurs pupils are really eager to contribute their ideas, for example, about the differences between similes and metaphors, because the lesson content, while very challenging, is well matched to their needs. Basic skills are taught thoroughly, but there are too few opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills well in other subjects across the curriculum. Teaching assistants provide good support, and weekly briefings from the deputy headteacher ensure they are effective in supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Recent improvements to the assessment systems ensure that progress is regularly checked and as a result, difficulties are now quickly identified and tackled. However, the information is currently insufficiently used to set precise targets for individual pupils' improvement. Oral feedback given by teachers is of a good quality, but written feedback in pupils' books does not consistently inform pupils of the next steps they need to take to improve their work.

The curriculum serves pupils well and an interesting range of topics make learning very relevant including, for example, a European arts week. A major emphasis is given to pupils' personal development and strong links with the church make a significant contribution to their spiritual and moral development. The school's use of the excellent outside garden learning area and the very good work done in art, are powerful ways of ensuring that pupils enjoy and remember their learning. Pupils are increasingly being

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asked what they hope to find out from topics being studied. In one class beginning to work on a topic about rainforests, a child commented, 'I want to know why are people cutting down trees and killing animals.' Very good links with other schools promote smooth induction and transition for all pupils. A strong feature of the curriculum is the way it is enriched by clubs and activities, as well as by a range of visits and visitors to support learning.

Pupils are cared for exceptionally well. Parents and carers are especially appreciative of the keen sense of belonging that the school provides. There are very effective systems in place to promote good attendance. Pupils say that staff are very quick to identify and address any concerns they may have. Support staff are highly skilled at supporting individual pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's self-evaluation is accurate. The school provides a learning environment where pupils are very happy and get on exceedingly well together. Equality of opportunity is promoted well and no form of discrimination is tolerated. The highly effective leadership and management of the headteacher, with good support from the deputy headteacher, governing body and other members of staff, have ensured a very strong shared sense of purpose for continuous improvement and for embedding ambition. In particular, concerted efforts to improve pupil tracking information has been successful. The governing body shares in all aspects of leadership and management and carries out its duties well. It is very much involved in shaping the direction of the school. The views of parents and carers are canvassed and discussed and relationships with them are very good.

Leaders and the governing body have ensured that safeguarding procedures follow best practice guidance and that they are always given a high priority in the school's everyday work. The key factor that makes safeguarding effective is that pupils are very aware of the importance of being safe and can articulate their views of how they can play their part in this important area. The school works extremely well with the local community and has an excellent understanding of its context and local needs. Outstanding partnerships with local schools, the church and environmental agencies, also help to provide pupils with a very good understanding of local communities, but developing partnerships in the wider community are not as strong. As a result, community cohesion

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is good. The school makes effective use of its budget and provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good quality teaching and effective leadership and management ensure that all children are totally absorbed in experiencing all aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. Children are cared for well and really enjoy their learning experiences. The staff team works closely together. Children enter school with skills and knowledge typical for children of this age. They settle quickly and are starting to become confident learners. Children's more formal learning is purposeful and they have appropriate opportunities to follow their interests in self-chosen activities, which they set about with enthusiasm. For example, learning was clearly fun for those children involved in counting the dinosaurs in the sand tray. By the time children enter Year 1, many exceed what is expected nationally of them in all areas of learning. Children's outstanding behaviour and very good relationships with others are major features of their developing social skills. Good use is made of the outside area to promote learning. There are very good links with parents and carers, enabling them to support their children's learning well at home.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a well above average return rate of questionnaires from parents and carers. Almost all questionnaires indicate strong support for all aspects of the school's work confirming inspectors' judgements that this is a good school. A small number of parents and carers had concerns about the level of information they receive from the school on their children's progress. Inspectors looked into this matter and found the school provides as much information and as frequently as in most schools.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary and Michael Catholic 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 92 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 120 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	70	76	22	24	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	75	82	16	17	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	49	53	31	34	7	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	49	53	32	35	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	59	64	27	29	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	54	59	30	33	4	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	60	65	28	30	1	1	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)	55	60	25	27	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	52	57	32	35	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	48	52	37	40	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	47	51	37	40	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	65	71	25	27	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	67	73	22	24	0	0	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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.



18 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary and Michael Catholic Primary School, Preston, PR3 1RB

Thank you for the very friendly welcome you all gave me when I inspected your school recently. It was lovely to see how the children who had just started school were enjoying the exciting activities they were given to do. I really enjoyed my time with you and joining you in lessons. I am pleased to tell you that I agree with your opinion that your school provides a good standard of education. I enjoyed talking to the salad servers, buddies and other pupils that met with me to talk about what they thought about school. They were all superb ambassadors for the school.

You are right when you say that all the adults working in your school make lessons interesting and that if you need help you get it. You make good progress in your work and attain standards that are good for your age. You work very hard in lessons and behave outstandingly well; you are very polite. You told me that you feel VERY safe in school and that if problems occur an adult will sort it out quickly when you tell them about it. Staff take excellent care of you.

I have asked your school to make sure it provides plenty of challenging opportunities for you to use your writing skills in subjects, such as topic work. There is one other thing I have asked your school to do and that is to make sure that when your work is marked and targets set, that both aspects provide you with an even clearer view of what you need to do to improve your work.

It was well worth getting my shoes dirty in looking at the wonderful outside garden area that you have helped to create!

I am sure you will all keep on working hard.

Yours sincerely

Geoffrey Yates

Lead inspector

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