

St Mary's and St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School Blackburn

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119513
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	379824
Inspection dates	2–3 May 2012
Lead inspector	Christine Potter

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	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Rewaj
Headteacher	Andrea Thomson
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2008
School address	Bennington Street Blackburn BB2 3HP
Telephone number	01254 698301
Fax number	01254 698307
Email address	st.marys.and.st.josephs@blackburn.gov.uk



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Introduction

Inspection team

Christine Potter
Declan McCauley

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 17 lessons or part-lessons, taught by 10 teachers, observed group activities, listened to pupils reading and scrutinised a selection of pupils' workbooks. The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, members of the governing body, and local authority, staff, and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's evaluation of its effectiveness, the school development plan, records of attendance and behaviour, and documentation in relation to safeguarding and child protection. Inspectors also took account of 69 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, together with others completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

St Mary's and St Joseph's is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. There are well-above national average numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups attending the school. More than half of the pupils speak English as an additional language and a significant number of these children speak little English on entry to the Reception class. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, is higher than the national average. The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations of attainment and progress.

The school has several awards, including Artsmark Gold, Healthy Schools status, Eco-Schools Silver, and Every Child A Reader accreditation. The acting headteacher at the previous inspection was appointed to the permanent post in January 2012. The school provides a breakfast-club each morning.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because pupils' attainment in writing is slightly lower than in reading and mathematics and there remain some minor inconsistencies in teaching. Parents and carers are highly appreciative of the school's work and the progress their children make. Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel well cared for.
- Achievement is good. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is average. Pupils make good progress from starting points which are below expected levels for their age when they enter Reception class to when they leave in Year 6. The progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language is better than that of similar groups nationally. Overall, achievement throughout the school is better in reading and mathematics than in writing.
- Teaching is good overall, with some that is outstanding. The best teaching uses assessment to match tasks precisely to different abilities and provides appropriate pace and challenge to ensure that pupils are motivated and engaged. In some lessons, those aspects of teaching are less effective.
- The behaviour and safety of pupils are good. Pupils are courteous and considerate and there are good relationships between pupils and adults. Pupils' good behaviour in the majority of lessons and their positive attitudes contribute effectively to learning. The vast majority of pupils say that they feel safe in school.
- Leadership and management are good. School self-evaluation is accurate and the school knows its strengths and weaknesses well. Leaders and managers at all levels have a shared vision. School development planning and management of performance is rigorous and focused accurately on improving the quality of teaching and learning for all pupils. The curriculum places an appropriate emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills and enriching their experiences. It contributes well to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment in writing so that it matches that in reading and mathematics by:
 - ensuring pupils have regular speaking and listening opportunities which provide a starting point for their writing
 - providing a wide variety of highly stimulating experiences to inspire and enthuse writers.
- Improve the consistency of all teaching so that it is good or better by:
 - using assessment information to match learning activities precisely to individual pupils' needs
 - ensuring that learning proceeds at an appropriate pace
 - sharing the existing outstanding practice.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Most pupils enter school with skills and abilities below the levels expected for their age. They engage actively in their learning and make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because of the wide range of stimulating activities provided, both indoors and outdoors. Children, successfully, develop independence, confidence and curiosity about the world around them. Particular emphasis is placed on the acquisition of language skills, especially for those in the early stages of learning English. Teachers and teaching assistants question children skilfully and encourage them to express themselves, for example, as they observe minibeasts and experiment with symmetry. Exceptionally well-planned activities, based on rigorous observation and assessment, link children's learning across the range of provision. Children joined in enthusiastically to remind the 'Hungry Caterpillar' of what he had eaten, demonstrating their developing understanding of story sequencing, patterns, and the use of correct mathematical vocabulary.

Pupils continue to make good progress across Key Stages 1 and 2, so that, by the end of Year 6, attainment in English and mathematics is broadly average. School data indicate that gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils are narrowing, although there are slight variations between cohorts, for example, in the relative performance of boys and girls and those known to be eligible for free school meals. Those who speak English as an additional language make progress which is better than that of their counterparts nationally. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are supported well and make consistently good or better progress. A well-structured phonics programme (letters and the sounds that they make) and good opportunities for pupils to use reading in a range of subjects contribute to attainment in reading by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 that matches national expectations. Many pupils read with interest and enjoyment. Achievement in writing remains slightly below that in reading and mathematics. The school has taken action to raise standards in writing through a range of strategies, including writing experience days. Evidence from the school's own assessment data and from scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that standards are now beginning to improve. Key Stage 2 pupils, proudly, showed the imaginative stories they have written in 'Big Write' sessions and well-constructed information booklets about volcanoes. However, opportunities are missed sometimes to provide all

pupils with stimulating experiences or speaking and listening activities to inspire their writing. Actions taken by the school, including the effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) to challenge pupils' mathematical skills, have led to improved achievement in mathematics over the past three years.

Most children are enthusiastic about their learning and take a pride in their achievements. They enjoy challenge and the opportunity to apply skills in literacy and numeracy in a wide range of contexts. Almost all parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire agree that their children are making good progress at the school.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is mainly good and some is outstanding. Most teachers have high expectations of the pupils and classroom learning environments are attractive and stimulating. Teachers are enthusiastic, have good subject knowledge, and use praise and encouragement well to build strong relationships and motivate pupils. Individual pupil tracking systems are used effectively to identify those in need of additional support. A broad range of timely, well-targeted and closely-monitored interventions are provided by skilled staff to ensure that disabled pupils, pupils with special educational needs, and those with English as an additional language make good progress. Overall, the teaching of phonics is good and contributes to pupils' good progress in reading. Pupils comment that teachers make lessons interesting and fun. Well-planned links between curriculum subjects and practical experiences contribute well to pupils' enjoyment of learning and to their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. Almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire feel that their children are taught well.

In the best lessons, teachers use information from regular assessments well and activities are matched closely to the pupils' needs, providing appropriate levels of challenge for those of all abilities. Lessons move at a good pace which engages pupils and challenging questioning moves learning forward. Good opportunities are provided for children to develop as independent learners and to work collaboratively. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, pupils worked in groups to discuss and select from a range of Viking myths in order to prepare a 'freeze frame' photograph and description. Speaking and listening activities are used effectively to promote learning, such as when Year 4 pupils were given sharply focused opportunities to discuss the features of letter-writing with their 'talk partners'. Pupils were given time to reflect on their ideas before starting to write. In some lessons, however, the pace of teaching is not matched so well to pupils' needs and activities do not accurately take into account pupils' prior skills and understanding. Pupils become less engaged and opportunities for learning are missed.

Teachers' marking provides praise and encouragement. Most children demonstrate a good understanding of how to improve their work. Where opportunities are provided for pupils to assess their own work and that of their peers, their learning is enhanced. For example, in a Year 6 literacy lesson, pupils discussed each other's written autobiographies thoughtfully and sensitively and offered suggestions for improvement.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils behave well and there is a calm, safe and orderly environment within the school. Pupils are kind to each other and have very positive attitudes to school. Adults in school provide very good role models and an atmosphere of respect prevails. Good behaviour in

lessons contributes effectively to learning. Only very occasionally do pupils become restless in lessons and this is when teaching is less effective and pupils lose interest in the lesson. Pupils confirmed that the good behaviour seen by inspectors is typical and this was also the view expressed by the majority of parents and carers.

Clear school behaviour management systems set high expectations for behaviour and pupils perceive these to be applied consistently and fairly. The vast majority of pupils, parents and carers feel that any incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively by the school. Bullying incidents are rare. Concerns raised by a small number of pupils, parents and carers about bullying were investigated thoroughly by the inspection team and they found no evidence to support them. Pupils have a good awareness of the different types of bullying and show an especially good understanding of how to stay safe from cyber-bullying. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in different situations and the importance of not giving in to peer pressure.

The majority of pupils are punctual. Attendance is below average, but policies and procedures implemented by the school have led to sustained improvement over time. The breakfast-club provides a range of suitable activities and a calm environment which prepares children well for the school day.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has established a clear vision for the school and has secured the commitment of staff and the governing body. She is supported ably by other senior and middle leaders and by the governing body, who combine a range of expertise to drive school improvement. A consistent focus on improving the quality of teaching, combined with performance management and professional development opportunities for all staff and implementation of improved systems for tracking pupils' progress, have led quickly to the narrowing of gaps in achievement. However, the sharing of outstanding practice across the school is not fully developed. Self-evaluation is accurate and clearly planned actions in development planning have begun to have an impact on standards in writing.

The curriculum has a strong focus on developing pupils' basic skills and is planned well to meet the needs of all pupils. Effective links are made between areas of learning. The curriculum is enriched by a range of stimulating experiences and well-attended, out-of-school activities which promote active learning and engage pupils' interest. Pupils are involved regularly in artistic, sporting, and musical activities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is promoted well. The school, successfully, develops an ethos of co-operation, respect and caring for others. Particular emphasis is placed on enhancing pupils' insight into different faiths through inter-faith experiences.

Relationships with parents and carers are very positive and the school seeks their views. Well-established systems ensure that parents and carers are kept well informed and opportunities are provided to help them support their children's learning. The school is committed to providing equality of opportunity, tackling discrimination, and raising the aspirations of all pupils. Good partnerships with external agencies support pupils and families whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. Safeguarding arrangements are effective.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



4 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's and St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Blackburn, BB2 3HP

Thank you all very much for making my colleague and me so welcome when we inspected your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you, hearing your views and looking at your work. We found that St Mary's and St Joseph's is a good school.

You behave well in lessons and are very friendly and polite. You are kind to each other and this makes the school a happy place. Teachers work hard to make sure that you enjoy your lessons and make good progress. You are keen to learn and said that most lessons are fun and interesting. You particularly enjoy the special events like 'Wellybobs Farm'. Your education gets off to a good start in the Reception class and you reach the standards expected of you when you leave the school. You feel safe and well cared for in school.

There are still some things that we think the school needs to do to make sure that you all make as much progress as possible and so we have asked the leaders and managers to:

- help you to improve your writing by giving you plenty of opportunities to develop your speaking and listening and to give you lots of exciting things to write about
- make sure you are always taught well, at a good pace and with tasks and activities that are always just right for each of you.

We know that you will help by continuing to work hard and behave well. Once again, thank you for making us so welcome.

Yours sincerely

Christine Potter
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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