



St Mary's RC Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105250
LEA Bolton
Inspection number 277325
Inspection dates 14 November 2005 to 15 November 2005
Reporting inspector Mr John Heap CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Victoria Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Horwich
Age range of pupils	5 to 11		Bolton, Lancashire BL6 6EP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01204 333625
Number on roll	248	Fax number	01204 333626
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Father Jones
Date of previous inspection	13 November 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Claire Massingham

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized primary school with a below average proportion of children entitled to free school meals or with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most are from white British families; others are from minority ethnic heritages, but very few are learning English as an additional language. A very small group of children is looked after by the local authority. Attainment on entry is below average. Plans for the improvement of accommodation in the Foundation Stage are in place and building work is imminent.

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, with some outstanding features, providing good value for money. Inspectors agree largely with the school's self-evaluation, but think personal development is outstanding. Progress in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. It could be even better if expectations were more ambitious. By the end of Year 2 children are above average because their rate of progress increases from Year 1. There are well above average standards by the end of Year 6 and children achieve well to reach them. Most children learn well, but lack opportunities to sharpen their skills in writing. Teachers' marking does not yet always provide enough advice about what to do next, so children lack a measure of individual guidance. Those children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who are learning English as an additional language or are looked after by the local authority progress well due to the personalised help they are given.

One parent summed up the views of many by observing that, "the school provides a lovely balance of academic and personal education: every child really does matter." This balance is achieved by making sure that good teaching provides interesting things for children to do and that they are cared for effectively. These strengths are produced by good leadership and management. The school has improved well since its last inspection and is set to make good progress in the future because areas for improvement are identified wisely. Moreover, there are outstanding links with groups in the community and a school abroad that enhance children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

Raise standards in writing by:

- increasing the quality and amount of writing across the full range of subjects
- ensuring marking tells children the progress they are making towards their individual targets.

Improve progress in the Foundation Stage by using assessment information to set challenging targets, particularly for the highest attaining children.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are well above average by the end of Year 6. Many children start the Foundation Stage with a distinct lack of experience in writing. Progress is sound, but attainment is still slightly below the expected levels by the end of the year. Expectations for most children in Reception are apt, but challenge provided for those capable of higher attainment lacks bite and they could do better. The above average standards by the end of Year 2 demonstrate the quick progress made by children in Years 1 and 2, but even here writing lags behind reading and mathematics. Too few children in Year 2 reach the higher levels in writing. Children capitalise on

this good achievement and reach well above average standards by the end of Year 6. Achievement in all subjects including English is good, but writing is still the relative weakness in an otherwise positive picture. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are above average. Children in Year 6 can, for example, produce visually exciting multi-media presentations. Those who need extra help of any kind make consistently good progress because their needs are identified clearly and they receive the right kind of assistance.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Children enjoy school greatly and this is reflected in their above average attendance. Their knowledge and understanding of the diverse world in which they live has improved greatly since the school's last inspection. An exemplary partnership with a school in India has played a major role in broadening children's horizons. Furthermore, residential visits give them a superb taste of communal living that accelerates learning about how to get on with other people.

Attitudes to school and work, behaviour and relationships are excellent. The generally good progress in basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT equips them well for future learning and the world of work. One Year 2 child echoed the sentiments of other children in stating, "I like school because everyone is friendly and helpful". They all agree that they learn in a safe and healthy environment. Knowledge about a healthy lifestyle is widespread. The school helps greatly in this respect to the great appreciation of parents. The profile of sport and other physical activity is high because there are many links with local clubs, facilities and agencies. Thus the school is well on the way to achieve the national Activemark Gold award.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching produces good learning in most classes. Children who need special help and attention are taught well. Teachers and support staff are very sensitive to their specific needs. Teaching is satisfactory in the Reception class, but the information about children's learning is not always used well enough to establish the right level of challenge. Elsewhere, children learn well in lessons because knowledgeable teaching plans activities well and resources are chosen to make learning interesting. The successful atmosphere in classrooms is enlivened by excellent relationships. Many useful links are made between subjects to add meaning to tasks, but writing is not used effectively enough as a tool for communication in subjects such as history and geography. Most children could do better in this respect, particularly higher attainers.

There are some highly creative teaching methods used. For example, a stage was erected in a Year 1 classroom, decked out with twinkling lights and a microphone for

children to use. This magical atmosphere inspired children to make rapid progress in expressing themselves. Teachers mark children's work regularly, and give advice orally about possible improvements. Children lack targets to work towards in their writing that would help them to progress faster.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum meets all statutory requirements. Basic skills are developed well through the many relevant and interesting activities. The curriculum in English, mathematics and science has been improved now that it is directed at children who are grouped by attainment. For example, lower attaining children are taught in smaller groups with the right level of challenge. Furthermore, after-school study support and homework clubs promote good working habits. Learning is enriched by lessons in French and Spanish and a range of visits and visitors.

The programme is packed with interesting activities that develop personal skills. Residential visits are particularly effective at boosting academic and social development. Children's health and safety are of paramount importance, so regular lessons are given about a range of topics such as drugs awareness. Enterprise is encouraged and fund raising events organised by children on the school council has enabled new playground equipment to be purchased.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care. A close eye is kept on children's behaviour, attendance and personal needs, so potential difficulties are overcome. Children are confident that there will always be a listening ear for them. Teachers know their children well and use professional help, from outside agencies, effectively when the need arises. The monitoring of children's work and achievement contributes well to the good teaching found in Years 1 to 6. The setting of personalised targets for children in mathematics provides good guidance. This system is having a positive effect on learning and the school rightly intends to extend it. For example, children in the Foundation Stage lack this kind of clear guidance as do children, throughout the school, in their writing. Procedures for safeguarding the children are good. Arrangements for child protection are in place and followed well. Parents welcome being involved in their children's education and this collaboration helps to facilitate learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Parents endorse this view wholeheartedly. The headteacher sets a clear direction and is successfully leading the school towards further success. Self-evaluation is mostly accurate and canvasses the views of staff, parents and children. Morale is high and teamwork is effective. Senior leaders work closely with the headteacher and are particularly effective at raising standards and ensuring

that all the children are cared for well. They lead strongly in areas such as monitoring, tracking progress and supporting colleagues. All are heavily involved in teaching and this helps them gain a deep knowledge and understanding of important issues. Resources are used well to ensure good achievement. For example, the teaching assistants are used well for children who need extra help in learning.

Improvements have been marked in the higher standards in Year 6, greater provision for multicultural development and the use of tracking to check children's achievements. Moreover, the school is well placed to improve further. Planning is detailed, far reaching and focused on current priorities. So, the Foundation Stage is soon to get a purpose-built area and more assistance in making sure that children progress well. The effective governing body plays a full part. It is a knowledgeable group that benefits from regular and detailed reports from staff on a very wide range of matters. Financial management is good and the school successfully seeks value for money in all its dealings. The Foundation Stage curriculum has been constrained by inadequacies in the building. Prudent budgeting has set aside funds to be used in the new Foundation Stage and this is a priority for improvement.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

The inspectors really enjoyed being in your good school this week. It was a privilege and a pleasure for us to work alongside you and the staff of the school. We were delighted that many of you wished to talk with us and we were impressed by the courtesy and help you provided.

What we really liked about your school:

- your outstanding behaviour and attitude to work
- the excellent relationships between the children and with the adults in the school
- the way that you are learning about different cultures and lifestyles in this country
- the good progress that you make in learning about English, mathematics and science, particularly in Years 1 to 6
- the good teaching, particularly in Years 1 to 6
- the good care and guidance you get
- the way that Mrs Massingham and her senior colleagues run the school well.

We have asked your teachers to:

- help you make the quality of your writing better. You can all be very helpful by making sure that you do your best written work in all the subjects, not just in English. Read teachers' comments in your books very carefully and try really hard to reach the targets they are setting for you. The skills that you learn now will be very important to you when you move to secondary school and later to work
- make sure that children in Reception make even more progress than they do at present.

The inspection team wishes you good fortune for the future.