



St Mary's and St Joseph's RC Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119513
LEA Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number 280578
Inspection dates 2 November 2005 to 3 November 2005
Reporting inspector Gordon Alston

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Bennington Street Blackburn Lancashire, BB2 3HP
School category	Voluntary aided	Telephone number	01254 698301
Age range of pupils	4 to 11	Fax number	01254 698307
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Chair of governors	Father Francis Parkinson
Number on roll	207	Headteacher	Mrs Elaine Grimshaw
Appropriate authority	The governing body		
Date of previous inspection	1 March 2000		

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 2 November 2005 - 3 November 2005	Inspection number 280578
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St. Mary's and St. Joseph's is a Catholic primary school serving an area of significant social deprivation in Blackburn in Lancashire. The 207 pupils in the school cover the full range of abilities. Many enter the school with skills well below those expected for their age, especially in language. The number of pupils who do not have English as their first language is well above average, and a significant number of these children have little English on entry to the reception class. The number of pupils who receive free school meals is well above average, and the proportion of pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties is above average. The school has gained a Healthy School Award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's own self-evaluation. This is a good school, greatly valued by parents, pupils and the local community. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and pupils achieve well from a low starting point. Standards at 11 are above average in mathematics and ICT, and average in English. Pupils make good progress. The school is working hard at raising standards in writing, and has introduced several new and effective initiatives. All pupils are given every opportunity to succeed, and most do so. The good quality of care, guidance and support provided by the school, the good teaching and the many enrichment activities lead to pupils' good personal development, reflected in their very good relationships, good attitudes and responsible behaviour. They enjoy their school, and are positively encouraged to think for themselves and to have their say. Overall, leadership and management are good. The leadership of the headteacher and the deputy is very good in its relentless drive for improvement. For example, the school is exploring opportunities to reorganise the curriculum in order to promote enjoyment through learning. The leadership and management of subjects are good. Governors discharge their responsibilities well, and the school gives good value for money. It has improved markedly since the last inspection, and is well placed to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of recent initiatives aimed at improving pupils' writing.
- Extend the current plans to further promote enjoyment through learning throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress, many from a low starting point, particularly in language and communication. They make good progress in the reception class, and by the end of Year 2, standards are broadly average. Standards at 11 are above average in mathematics and average in English. National test results in Year 6 have been about average but are usually better in reading, mathematics and science than in writing. All subjects have improved in recent years and pupils reach the targets set in most areas. Standards in ICT at 11 are above those expected for pupils of this age.

The school sets challenging targets that encourage pupils to work hard and make good progress. Targets are checked termly to ensure pupils make the progress they should.

No group is significantly underachieving. The significant number of pupils whose first language is not English make good progress, as do the pupils with learning difficulties. This is because they receive good support from a very conscientious team of assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Learners are enthusiastic, work hard and co-operate well with each other. They enjoy having visitors and talk confidently about how proud they are of their school. Behaviour in lessons and around school is good: pupils show respect and consideration for others. Pupils willingly accept responsibility such as acting as playground leaders. School council members represent their classmates conscientiously. For example, they are currently debating how best to redeem the large number of vouchers the school has collected. Pupils show a good and developing awareness of how to become good citizens.

Spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. The school celebrates pupils' achievements in lessons and assemblies. Spiritual development is a strength. Pupils are very strongly encouraged to adopt safe and healthy lifestyles. The school has gained a Healthy School Award and makes fresh fruit available for infant pupils at morning break. Attendance is satisfactory. It is much improved since the last inspection, but extended holidays for some pupils depress the overall statistics. Punctuality is good. Pupils' good progress in most key skills prepares them well for the next stages in their education and life in the wider world.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Pupils enjoy lessons and say that their teachers make learning fun. Pupils with learning disabilities and those for whom English is not their first language are well supported in lessons and make good progress. Learners are provided with suitable opportunities to work in groups, to take responsibility for their own learning and to develop their thinking skills. These aspects have improved since the previous inspection. Lessons are well planned, and clear learning objectives make sure pupils understand what they have to do. Teachers' good explanations and demonstrations ensure that learners can undertake new work with confidence and make good progress. Teachers develop pupils' basic skills of literacy, mathematics and ICT well, which is raising standards.

Information from the school's analysis of test results is used well to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This has been successful in the teaching of reading. Though some good examples of work were seen, writing standards still lag behind reading. Pupils' progress is tracked very thoroughly in English and mathematics and used well to identify pupils who need more help. The school has recently reviewed its marking policy and some good examples of helpful comments were seen in English.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum successfully meets the needs of learners. It has some very good features. The good Foundation Stage curriculum is firmly based on learning through activity. As a result, children are given a good start to their education. Throughout the school, provision in ICT is very good and makes sure pupils use their skills in other subjects. The school places a strong emphasis on making learning enjoyable and ensures that pupils acquire basic skills well in English, mathematics and science. Pupils are given clear information about how to keep safe and healthy, and accept responsibility by, for example, being a member of the school council. This is helping them to become young citizens, involved in how their community is run and learning how to cope with changes and dangers in their lives.

The curriculum is enriched by a very good range of after-school activities, particularly sport and games. The school is currently exploring how to promote enjoyment through learning, for example, by linking subjects together. However, such practice is not consistent.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This aspect is one of the school's most positive features. Staff know the pupils well and are fully committed to their welfare. Adults are positive role models and foster very good relationships so that there is no bullying or racism. Pupils with specific needs are provided for very well because there is an acceptance that every child matters and learns in different ways. Their progress is reviewed regularly and the school works closely with external agencies and with parents and carers.

Child protection and health and safety arrangements are effective. Pupils feel safe and know they have someone to go to if they are worried. The school also successfully helps pupils understand the importance of good health. In discussion, pupils displayed a very good understanding of the need to take regular exercise and the effect it can have on the body.

Learners' progress is carefully monitored and tracked in English and mathematics, but less effectively in other subjects. Thorough procedures ensure that children make a smooth start in the reception class and settle quickly. The good links with the local high school also ease pupils' transition to the next stage of their education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good and the school has a good capacity to improve. The headteacher and deputy share a strong belief that all pupils should enjoy learning, and do well both academically and in their personal development. This is the driving force in providing a school that meets the needs of its community well, where pupils make good progress on all fronts. This belief filters throughout the

school leading to a common sense of purpose amongst a dedicated, caring team of staff. Co-ordinators are enthusiastic and strive to raise the quality of teaching in their subjects.

The school now successfully evaluates its own performance. For example, it has identified the need to improve standards in writing and is carrying out clear and detailed action plans. All issues from the last inspection have been dealt with well and improvements made. The school conscientiously seeks the views of parents and pupils about school improvement and takes account of their views in planning. The good use of all resources helps to ensure that pupils' progress is good, and secures good value for money. Staff are very carefully scrutinised for their ability to meet the needs of the pupils. The school realises the importance of strong links to parents to support its work and its success is reflected in the deservedly good reputation it has with parents and the community.

The governance of the school is good. Governors are closely involved in improvement planning, meet their statutory duties well and clearly know what the school is achieving. They are regular visitors, getting to know pupils and staff and good use is made of their skills. For example, one governor provides valuable support about child protection and care matters.

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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?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	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	3	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?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	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

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4th November 2005

Dear Pupils

I am writing this letter after thinking about the two enjoyable days we spent in your school and want to thank you all so much for making the experience such a pleasurable one. We came to see how good your school was and you had a very important role in this just as much as your teachers had.

You did not let the school down in any way. Your friendliness, good behaviour and the way you get on with one another are a credit to you all. They helped us to judge just how good your school is in helping you to grow and learn.

Well, what did we think after these two days? I know your teachers were a little worried about inspectors coming, but our report should help them feel good about all the hard work they do. I always ask pupils their views of the school and one girl replied 'lessons are fun and everyone is important'. She was right; your school is a good, caring school. You have a good team of adults led by a hard-working head teacher and everyone wants you to do as well as you can. Your teachers make learning interesting, make sure you work hard, and as a result you make good progress in lessons. They also arrange lots of visits for you to go on and visitors to talk to you. We were pleased to see how very hard you worked but equally important was how very well everyone got on. We saw lots of pupils who had responsibilities and jobs to do, who did them very well. We were also very pleased to see all the clubs you can go to and the good attendance by you to take regular exercise and that sport is important to you.

I'm sure your teachers always say 'this work is good but you could make it even better if you...'
Well, this is what we are telling your school – to get even better it needs to do two things:

try to get standards even higher in writing

we want your teachers to continue to develop lots of learning opportunities that will help make life at school even more enjoyable.

Finally, we would like to thank you again and I am sure if you and your teachers continue to work as hard as you did when we were in school your school will continue to do well.

Gordon Alston
(Lead inspector)

Annex B