



St Mary's CofE Primary School, Deane

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 105203
Local Authority Bolton
Inspection number 287155
Inspection dates 17–18 January 2007
Reporting inspector Derek Aitken

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Edale Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Bolton
Age range of pupils	3–11		Lancashire BL3 4QP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01204 333494
Number on roll (school)	259	Fax number	01204 333495
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr J Tudor
		Headteacher	Mrs Diane Jeffries
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is of average size. More pupils than is usual join or leave the school between Year 1 and the end of Year 6. Pupils come from a variety of social backgrounds but the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The majority of pupils are White British; others include pupils of Indian and Black African heritage. A few pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school has seen major changes in staffing at all levels in the last four terms, including the arrival of a new headteacher. The school has a wide range of partnerships with educational establishments.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with good features. The school judges itself to be good but inspectors do not agree because pupils' academic achievement, teaching and learning and the curriculum are not yet consistently good. Its strengths lie first and foremost in the exceptional quality of the headteacher, supported well by an able leadership team, aspects of pupils' personal development and the pastoral care provided by staff. The many innovations in provision have impacted positively on pupils' attitudes to school and boosted their social skills and self-esteem. School is a happy place. The 'Tribes' programme is not only developing pupils' confidence, but also laying the groundwork for them to learn more effectively. The school's welcoming atmosphere enables those pupils at an early stage of English language acquisition to settle in quickly. It provides good care for its pupils, an increasing number of whom join or leave it outside the normal times.

From a starting point of skills and knowledge lower than is expected for their age, pupils make satisfactory progress so that by the time they reach Year 6 standards are below average. An increasing number of pupils are now, however, making good progress in Years 1 to 6, but this is not yet uniform and varies from year to year. Pupils in the upper years have some ground to make up in their learning.

Teaching and the curriculum have improved substantially in the last four terms and inspection evidence agrees with the school that these areas are satisfactory with several good features. Inadequacy in the quality of teaching and learning in the middle years of the school has been tackled decisively.

The Foundation Stage is good. Children's learning is well directed as staff are carefully deployed and work closely as a team to provide children with a good range of experiences.

Recent curricular innovations are giving pupils opportunities to exercise some independence in their learning but pupils are insufficiently involved in the assessment of their learning to enable them to know precisely what next steps they need to take. Strategies to challenge more able pupils, including those who are gifted and talented, are underdeveloped. Resources for learning are improving. The very new information and communication technology suite is also enhancing links with parents.

Parents and carers say that they are happy with the standard of education their children receive. The school benefits from a good quality of leadership and management, which has improved provision substantially in the last four terms. All initiatives are thoroughly prepared, implemented systematically and carefully evaluated. Self-evaluation is good. Partnerships with educational and other establishments are increasingly effective. Leaders have a keen awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses, although certain systems, for example, the use of data, have yet to be fine-tuned to ensure maximum impact on the quality of learning and the progress of pupils. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall but has accelerated sharply in recent months. The capacity for improvement is good. The school offers satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Remove the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning to ensure all pupils make good progress.
- Fully involve pupils in the assessment of their learning so that they know better how to improve their work.
- Ensure new curricular initiatives have sufficient focus on raising standards and achievement, especially for the more able.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

On entry to the Nursery children's skills and knowledge are lower than expected for three-year-olds. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage because their learning is thoughtfully organised and carefully tailored to develop their weak language skills. By the time pupils join Year 1 standards remain below average, largely because some more able children do not proceed to Reception. Pupils' progress accelerates from Year 2 but slows again towards the end of Key Stage 2 because teachers have to spend extra time reinforcing skills that have not been developed sufficiently well earlier on. The school's results in the national tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in 2005 were significantly below average overall. However, in 2006, the results in Year 2 showed a marked improvement. This upturn shows encouraging signs of the early impact of the school's well chosen strategies to raise standards. Appropriate targets were met in English and mathematics in Year 6. However, standards remained below average, especially at Level 5. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy their education and have positive attitudes to learning. This is reflected not only in improved attendance but also in pupils' behaviour, which is good, both in lessons and at break-time. Pupils relate well to each other and very well to staff. This is because there is a strong bond of mutual respect that is reflected in pupils' courteous and cooperative attitudes. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils feel safe in school and know how to seek help if needed. They are confident that any issues or concerns they have will be dealt with fairly and promptly. The developing school council is enabling them to contribute to decision-making in school. Pupils are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles through the provision of fruit and healthy snacks and the popular, extensive programme of physical education, which includes specialist coaching. The weekly enrichment afternoon provides good opportunities for pupils in different year groups to work together and learn new skills. In 'Tribes' lessons, teamwork and collaborative working are reinforced further.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The best teaching features high expectations of behaviour and work rate, with excellent relationships and very secure knowledge of the subject being taught. Tasks are interesting and challenge pupils to try their best, and routines are clear and well established. Less effective lessons provide fewer opportunities for pupils to work independently, or to reflect on their own learning. Sometimes teachers spend a little too much time explaining tasks, which slows the pace of learning. Support from teaching assistants is very effective and enables all children to participate in lessons, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The increased proportion of good teaching and learning reflects the decisive action taken by those leading subjects. Although pupils work is marked regularly, they do not get enough clear guidance on how to improve. Teachers use information on pupils' progress to plan lessons but do not set specific targets for individual pupils to help them move on faster.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' progress. The Foundation Stage provides for all areas of learning so that children learn to play and share well together. A major revision of the curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2 is being implemented, designed to meet the needs of pupils more closely and provide more opportunities for creativity and personal development. Staff are working hard to ensure that this approach enhances pupils' enjoyment and skills at problem-solving. Pupils are relishing the increased opportunities they have to exercise choice in their learning and to work collaboratively, but it is too early to judge whether a significant impact on standards is being achieved, especially those of more able pupils. Arrangements for gifted and talented pupils are underdeveloped. Extra-curricular activities are well established and provide a number of sporting and artistic opportunities, which are appreciated by pupils and families.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Arrangements for safeguarding the health, safety and welfare of pupils are in place and the school has good strategies to support vulnerable pupils through partnership with other agencies. There are many opportunities for pupils to feel valued and have their achievements recognised, which builds their confidence and self-esteem. Good induction procedures help the Nursery children and the increasing number who join the school part-way through their education, to settle happily into new routines. Effective procedures and systems for tracking the progress of pupils have been introduced and these enable staff to identify those needing additional support. The

targets set for most pupils are challenging and promote progress, though not supported fully enough for gifted and talented pupils to fulfil their potential. The school is working hard to develop links with parents. For example, the success of the work of the home/school liaison officer is reflected in the improving attendance of pupils. Parents' growing confidence in the school is summarised in the following words: 'It's a pleasure to send my children to this school'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of leadership and management is good. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding and provides a clear vision, determination, creativity and insight into what is needed to move the school forward. This has enthused pupils and colleagues and 'grown' an effective management team. This is in no small measure a result of the opportunities which all staff have, supported by extensive training, to influence the work of the school. Coordinators are accountable for the quality of their subjects, monitor this closely, and know what further action is needed. The school's self-evaluation accurately identifies strengths and areas that need to improve. The development plan is based on thorough analysis and review and provides clear guidelines for assessing performance and measuring progress. Performance management is well established and closely linked to school development. Rigorous monitoring has resulted in improvements in the quality of teaching, although this has not yet fed through to consistently higher standards of learning. Good induction arrangements are enabling new staff to settle in quickly and contribute effectively. Resources for learning and the accommodation have improved and now offer better support for pupils' progress. Governors provide a satisfactory balance of support and challenge for the school.

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Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We visited your school this week to find out how well you were learning. Thank you for making us welcome and being helpful when we asked you questions. We enjoyed meeting you and appreciated your friendliness and concern for us on that stormy Thursday!

We judge that you are receiving a satisfactory education, and there are an increasing number of good things about your school. Importantly, we saw how much your headteacher and the staff had done in a short space of time to make school more enjoyable and rewarding for you.

We were impressed by how well you got on with each other and the staff. You told us how much you enjoyed sporting and artistic activities. You behave well and are now attending more regularly. These help you learn better. The 'Tribes' programme is certainly helping you to work well together and your enrichment afternoon is giving you the chance to learn and practise useful new skills. The staff look after you well and you repay their trust by respecting them and being polite to everyone.

More of you are now making good progress in your learning. We have asked the headteacher to make sure teaching is consistently good for all of you and that it involves you more in assessment to help you learn faster. You can help by regularly checking how well you are doing and by telling your teachers if you are not sure how to improve your work. Finally, we have asked the headteacher to check that the new curriculum challenges you to reach higher standards, especially those of you who learn very quickly.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school. We hope you will carry on enjoying school and helping your teachers make St Mary's an even better place to be.