



St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Rochdale

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105833
Local Authority Rochdale
Inspection number 287345
Inspection dates 12–13 October 2006
Reporting inspector Arthur Markham

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Pot Hall
School category	Voluntary aided		Wilton Grove, Heywood
Age range of pupils	4–11		Lancashire OL10 2AA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01706 369340
Number on roll (school)	289	Fax number	01706 620189
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Rev P Daly
		Headteacher	Mrs Maureen Byrne
Date of previous school inspection	21 October 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average size school serves a diverse community. Some pupils travel to the school by bus from outside the immediate locality. Most pupils are of White British background with only a small number from minority ethnic groups. There are very few pupils at an early stage of learning English. The number of pupils claiming free school meals is below that in most schools, as is the number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has Investor in People status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Although the school judges itself to be good, inspectors find that it is providing a satisfactory and improving quality of education. School self-evaluation procedures are well organised, but they are not well embedded and, as a result, the school has overestimated its effectiveness. There are some good and outstanding features to its work. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school. Parents emphatically agree that their children like school, a view summed up by one parent who said, 'My daughter is very happy going to school and enjoys her learning'. Their personal development is outstanding because of the school's warm and welcoming ethos, good pastoral care and safe and secure environment in which to learn. Relationships and behaviour are excellent. Pupils like their teachers and show respect for each other and all adults. They enjoy learning and take a pride in their achievements. Pupils accept responsibilities enthusiastically and are pleased that their views are taken into account through the work of the school council. They are aware of the importance of healthy lifestyles and participate enthusiastically in the range of physical activities available to them.

Satisfactory teaching enables pupils of all ages to make steady progress. Achievement throughout the school is satisfactory. Children get off to a sound start in the Reception classes, although the lack of an outdoor area limits activities that contribute to their physical development. They settle quickly due to the caring approach of the staff and rapidly develop skills as independent learners. This prepares them successfully for the next stage of their learning. The good curriculum, which is enhanced well by a wide range of visits and visitors, makes school more stimulating for pupils and impacts positively on their learning. In Key Stage 1, close attention is given to the development of the basic skills in reading, writing and number and pupils attain standards that are slightly above average. In the national tests at Year 6, pupils' performance has been broadly average in recent years, but improved and was higher in 2006. The current Year 6 pupils are working at above average levels, which indicates that the improvement is being maintained. However, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6 lead to variations in the rate of progress made by pupils. These variations occur because not all teachers make effective use of assessment information to set learning targets for pupils. Similarly, when teachers mark pupils' work, their comments do not always help pupils to understand how they can improve.

The school provides satisfactory value for money. The headteacher's strong leadership provides a clear educational direction for the school. She presents a good role model for staff, who work well together and share her determination to improve the quality of education provided for pupils. Governors are involved and provide satisfactory support and challenge. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and, taking into account the determined leadership of the headteacher and the teamwork evident in the school, the capacity for further improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching to raise pupils' achievement.

- Improve target setting and marking procedures so that pupils understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further.
- Provide a secure outdoor play area to improve Reception children's physical development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children enter the Reception classes with skills that are broadly average for their age. They make satisfactory progress in all areas of learning and, by the time they enter Year 1, most reach the standards expected nationally. Throughout Years 1 and 2, pupils continue to make steady progress and attain standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are slightly above average. In Years 3 to 6, this rate of progress continues. Results for Year 6 in 2006 are higher than in 2005 and Year 6 pupils are working at standards that are above average. A significant factor in the gradual improvement in standards that has taken place in the last two years is the grouping of pupils in Year 6 by ability. Work observed indicates that the current Year 6 pupils are on target to maintain this improvement. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers because they receive good support and guidance from staff. Well targeted activities help them to succeed and develop confidence.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Parents are rightly pleased that their children thoroughly enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in the average but improving attendance and the excellent behaviour. Pupils understand the importance of keeping safe and eating healthily. They are proud of their achievements and have good attitudes to school and their work. These attributes and the development of sound basic skills mean that they are well prepared for later schooling and life. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They very clearly know the difference between right and wrong and form excellent relationships with adults and other pupils which are very firmly based on respect for all and reflect the strong Christian ethos of the school. Pupils welcome the many opportunities to take on responsibilities around school and are pleased that their views are taken into account through the work of the school council.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The positive atmosphere in all classrooms and excellent relationships generate an enjoyment of learning in pupils,

who behave extremely well. Some good teaching is evident in all year groups, but the picture is inconsistent. In the Reception classes, there is, rightly, a major emphasis on developing good learning habits and the basic skills. Elsewhere, effective teaching is characterised by high expectations and challenging tasks that stimulate the pupils to work hard. The use of searching questions challenges pupils' thinking and good use of praise raises their self-esteem. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory, teachers do not consistently challenge pupils of all abilities. Consequently, the progress they make slows.

Although teachers mark children's work diligently, they do not always explain what pupils need to do to help them to improve. Effective use of teaching assistants ensures that good quality support is given to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who make similar progress to their peers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of the vast majority of pupils well. It is well planned and gives due emphasis to the development of the basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, but the lack of a secure outside play area restricts their physical development. Throughout the school, a strong focus on personal, social and health education is reflected in the pupils' outstanding personal development. Links between subjects are used well to promote healthy and safe lifestyles. A wide range of visits and visitors enrich the curriculum and contribute to pupils' enjoyment. A particularly strong feature is the residential experience at Waddow Hall for Year 6 pupils. Provision is further extended by a wide variety of sporting, creative and educational activities outside the normal school day. These are well supported and appreciated by pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Parents and carers find staff approachable and appreciate the good level of pastoral care provided for their children. Appropriate procedures for child protection are in place and arrangements for health and safety are rigorous. Links with outside agencies are good. Pupils rightly feel safe at school, and are comfortable about confiding in staff if the need arises. Well organised induction procedures help them to quickly settle into school and good transition arrangements ensure that they make a smooth transfer into the secondary school. The academic guidance given to pupils is satisfactory. Staff make effective use of assessment information to organise groups containing pupils with similar learning needs, but target setting arrangements are not consistent or rigorous enough to drive up standards. Furthermore, teachers' guidance through marking is not consistently good in all classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher's purposeful leadership is a good role model for staff. She is well supported by the effective deputy headteacher and has successfully developed a team approach within the school. The staff understand her clear vision for the school and together they strive to provide a secure learning environment in which pupils can flourish. As a result, standards are rising. Parents are very pleased with the quality of education provided for their children. Systems are in place to ensure that the school runs smoothly. Financial management is satisfactory and monitoring and evaluation procedures are reasonably accurate, although some of the school's judgements of its performance are too generous. Performance management is used well and is closely linked to priorities in the school improvement plan in order to support the raising of standards. Governors monitor and evaluate the school's performance sufficiently and provide suitable challenge and support to the headteacher and staff.

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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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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	2
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?	2
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
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

As you know, three inspectors recently visited your school to find out how well you are learning. Thank you for being so friendly and talking to the inspectors. We very much enjoyed being in your school and listening to what you had to say. We decided that you are provided with a satisfactory quality of education. We think your school is a very welcoming place and is always trying to improve so that you enjoy your learning and do well. The things we judged to be good were:

- the way your teachers and other adults take good care of you and make sure that you feel safe and happy
- the way your headteacher runs the school, valuing your opinions and working hard to make the changes happen
- the way the teachers make learning fun so that you really enjoy school
- your excellent behaviour in lessons and around the school and the way you work hard for your teachers.

To make it even better, the school now needs to:

- help you to make consistently good progress in your learning by making sure that all lessons are stimulating and interesting
- make sure that teachers set targets and make comments on your written work to help you to understand what you need to do to improve
- develop an outside area for the Reception class so that the Reception children can enjoy learning outdoors.

Thank you for helping us so much with the inspection of your school. We hope that you will continue to work hard and help the teachers so that St Joseph's RC Primary becomes an even better school.