

St Michael and St John's Roman Catholic Primary School, Clitheroe

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119644
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	291489
Inspection date	1 May 2007
Reporting inspector	David Earley

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 on roll	
School	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Martin Nolan
Headteacher	Mr Vincent Murray
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2002
School address	Lowergate Clitheroe Lancashire BB7 1AG
Telephone number	01200 422560
Fax number	01200 422531

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school in the centre of Clitheroe. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is well below average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and there are no pupils who learn English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Standards on entry to the Foundation Stage (Reception) vary from year-to-year but are generally higher than expected for the children's ages.

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 and improving school with some outstanding features. The excellent leadership of the Headteacher, well supported by staff and governors, is a significant feature in the promotion of good standards and achievement.

Children enter the Foundation Stage (Reception) with standards which are usually higher than expected for their age. They make good progress so that by the end of the Foundation Stage standards are well above expectations. Good achievement and progress continue so that by the end of Year 2 standards are significantly above average. By the end of Year 6 standards are significantly above average overall, but average in writing. Adjustments to the curriculum in writing are leading to improving progress.

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school's Christian values are exemplified by the excellent behaviour and relationships. Pupils enjoy coming to school, attendance is good and they make an excellent contribution to the community. They are eager to learn because they feel happy and safe and work is stimulating and exciting. Pupils have an extremely good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and are very well prepared for their future economic well-being.

Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are lively and interesting so that pupils want to learn. Because assessment is used effectively, work is well suited to differing abilities. In lessons, teachers ensure that pupils know what they need to do in order to improve but this is not always made clear when they mark their work. The curriculum is good. There are lots of extra curricular activities, visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum so that pupils want to learn. Very good links with outside agencies and the local secondary school help to support and extend the curriculum. Provision for personal, social and health education is very good. The curriculum has been adjusted to provide increased opportunities to improve writing skills.

Care and guidance are excellent and this makes a significant contribution to personal development and achievement. This is a very caring school with a close knit family atmosphere. Staff know pupils and their families very well and most parents are very positive about the care shown to their children. A parent commented that the school has been exemplary in fulfilling its pastoral duties. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very good so that they usually make rapid progress. The school has very comprehensive systems for assessing and tracking progress and uses these very effectively to guide pupils so that they know what they need to do in order to improve. Government recommendations for safeguarding children are carefully followed.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a very clear vision for raising standards and improving provision and is well supported by staff and governors. Self-evaluation is realistic and leads to effective strategies, which are helping to improve standards and achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing at Key Stage 2.
- Improve marking to ensure pupils know what they need to do to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good overall. Pupils, whatever their ability or background, make good progress overall. The school's effective use of assessment and tracking and the good teaching and learning lead to significantly above average standards at the end of Year 6.

In the Foundation Stage, pupils make good progress from above expected standards for their age on entry. The standards reached by most pupils are well above expected when they reach Year 1.

Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1. The results of the assessments in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 in 2006 were significantly above average, as they have been for the last five years. The school's own data and inspection evidence indicate that the high standards in Year 2 are maintained and pupils achieve well and are currently on course to reach well above average standards.

In Key Stage 2, the rate of progress is generally sustained, leading to good achievement overall at the end of Year 6. The results of the national tests at the end of Year 6 were significantly above average in English, mathematics and science and this has been maintained for the last three years. However, given their starting points in Year 2, standards and achievement in writing in 2006 were not as high as expected. School data and inspection evidence indicate that currently pupils make good progress and achieve well and are on course to reach well above average standards in mathematics and science. Achievement in English is satisfactory overall and pupils are on line to reach marginally above average standards. Good progress is made in reading, in writing it is satisfactory. In order to bring English in line with mathematics and science, the school has made good adjustments to its curriculum in writing. This is leading to faster progress but there has been insufficient time for this to affect overall standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development, including spiritual, moral social and cultural development is outstanding. Behaviour and relationships are excellent, reflecting the Christian values of the school. Pupils approach their work with confidence. They have very caring attitudes to others and show high self-esteem. Pupils say that they love coming to school and this is reflected in their good attendance and punctuality. They have an excellent understanding of how to adopt healthy lifestyles and say that they feel safe and well cared for in school. Pupils are very willing to accept responsibility and help with the smooth running of the school. Their views are reflected through the school council, which takes action to improve life in school, such as the provision and organisation of play equipment and improvements in the toilet facilities. Because pupils work well independently and collaboratively and there is a strong focus on literacy, numeracy and on links with local businesses, pupils are very well prepared for their future economic well-being. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the local and wider communities. For example, they are involved in recycling and contribute to many local festivals. Pupils play a full part in the life of the parish and organise fund raising for charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good, leading to overall good progress. Teachers use assessment effectively to ensure that work is well adjusted to different abilities and learning styles. They have high expectations and challenge pupils to extend their learning. For example, in Year 2 pupils were challenged to identify concealed numbers. Lessons are typically conducted at a brisk pace and are lively and interesting so that pupils want to learn. In Year 6, the teacher made good use of humour and a wide range of interesting artefacts to help to extend skills in descriptive writing. Teachers ensure that pupils know what they are expected to learn and check their progress at the end of lessons so that they have a good understanding of their learning. However, in their marking of work teachers do not consistently provide pupils with advice on how they might improve. The school makes good use of teaching assistants, particularly in support of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is enriched by a wide range of extra curricular activities, visits and visitors. This is further enhanced by strong links with outside agencies and by the effective use the school makes of the local area to promote learning. For example, pupils work on the local 'Sheep Fest' to extend their art and design skills. The school has adjusted the balance of the curriculum in Key Stage 2 in order to increase the focus on drama, speaking and listening and the extension of vocabulary. This is leading to improvements in writing. Personal, social and health education are very well provided for, giving pupils an excellent understanding of how to follow healthy lifestyles. Links with the local secondary school are very good so that the teaching of modern foreign languages is extended into the primary school and the transfer to the next stage of education is usually a smooth one.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Relationships are excellent and the school has a very caring ethos. This is enhanced by the school's promotion of Christian values and the excellent role models provided by adults. The school provides a very high level of support for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, thus contributing significantly to their personal development and academic achievement. The school works very closely with parents and families and maintains a very strong family atmosphere. One parent commented that she had nothing but praise for this 'brilliant school' and that she would be losing part of her extended family when the child left. Child protection and risk assessment procedures are in place and the school carefully follows government recommendations for safeguarding children. There are very effective systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress so that pupils and teachers know what pupils need to do in order to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides exemplary leadership and shares his dedication and vision for improvement with staff. This leads to a shared commitment to provide the best for their pupils within a caring and inclusive community. Staff work well together as a team to provide a rich curriculum and in setting challenging targets for improvement, leading to high academic and personal achievement. The school's performance is evaluated rigorously in order to make improvements and the school development plan is based on a comprehensive appraisal of its strengths and weaknesses. Teaching and learning are regularly monitored and subject coordinators have a good understanding of their subjects and check teaching and learning in order to make improvements. Governors are very supportive. They know the school well and make good use of training in order to contribute to school improvement. This enables them to help shape the direction of the school and hold it to account for its performance. Issues from the previous inspection have been successfully addressed and the budget is carefully managed in order to assist in raising standards and improve provision.

Strong leadership, a shared commitment to improve and rigorous self-evaluation give the school good capacity to improve.

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Annex A

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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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?	1

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.

Annex A

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	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

2 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael and St John's Roman Catholic Primary School, Clitheroe, BB7 1AG

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I came to visit your school.

I was very impressed by your kindness and courtesy and by the way you care for others. I was pleased to hear that you enjoy coming to school and that you feel safe and well looked after. I was also extremely impressed by the way you try to keep fit and eat a sensible diet.

Here are some of the things your school does well:

- you work hard and reach high standards in English, mathematics and science
- teachers work well together to help you to improve your work and leadership is strong
- you are very confident, behave well and help people in the local and wider community
- all of you, including the school council, help to make the school a better place
- teachers make lessons interesting and there are lots of visits, visitors and after school clubs, so that you want to learn
- the school is like a big family where every one cares for each other.

For your school to become even better I think that older pupils should try to improve their writing and that teachers should mark your work in a way that shows you how to improve it.

Thank you once again for making me so welcome and I hope your potatoes do well in the competition!

Yours sincerely

David Earley

Lead Inspector