

St Marie's Roman Catholic Primary School, Bury

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105335
Local Authority	Bury
Inspection number	308835
Inspection date	5 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Julie Price Grimshaw

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	243
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jim Hyndman
Headteacher	Mrs F Robinson
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Edward Street The Mosses Bury Lancashire BL9 0RZ

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	5 November 2008
Inspection number	308835

Telephone number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the consistency of pupils' progress across Key Stage 1 and 2; the quality of provision for gifted and talented pupils, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language; the school's effectiveness in promoting community cohesion. Evidence was gathered from: national published assessment data and the school's own records; scrutiny of pupils' work, a range of school documentation and parents' questionnaires; observations of the school at work; discussions with staff, pupils and the chair of the governing body. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that most of the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school serving an area of social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is almost twice the national average, and the majority of these pupils speak a home language other than English. A significant proportion of pupils, mainly of Polish heritage, are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is just above the national average. The school holds several awards including the Sports England Activemark and the Healthy School's Award. There is provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in the Nursery and Reception classes. There is provision for before and after school care on the same site as the school, which is subject to a different inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Marie's is a good school where all pupils benefit from first-rate pastoral care. Pupils speak with enthusiasm and appreciation of their 'kind and caring' teachers. Behaviour is excellent; pupils are welcoming, polite and courteous. They thoroughly enjoy coming to school, as shown in their above average attendance and relish the opportunities to take on additional responsibilities, for example, as play leaders and school council members. As a result, they become confident and mature young people, who benefit greatly from the friendly atmosphere and harmonious climate of the school. Parents are full of praise for the school and make comments such as 'I would not send my child to any other school' and 'there has not been one day when my child doesn't want to come to school' 'my other child can't wait to start next September!'

From very low starting points in the EYFS, pupils make consistently good progress throughout Reception and Key Stages 1 and 2 to reach standards that are broadly average by the end of Year 6. Over the past few years, attainment at Key Stage 2 has shown an upward trend, and standards in science are particularly impressive, being slightly above average. The school has responded very well to an issue raised at the time of the last inspection relating to the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills. This has become a focus for much of the work carried out across subjects and as a result pupils make very good progress in this area. The achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, due to the high quality individual support provided. Similarly, pupils at the early stages of learning English make good, and sometimes, outstanding progress as a result of additional language support. They quickly become confident in their use of English, which helps them to achieve well in terms of both their academic and personal development.

Pupils know how to stay healthy and are pleased that St Marie's holds the Healthy School's award. They talk about the importance of exercise to maintain a healthy heart and know that eating fruit is desirable 'because it contains important vitamins.' Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is outstanding. Although the school's work is underpinned by the Roman Catholic faith, pupils have an excellent awareness of other faiths. They say that they 'are taught to respect people from all cultures'. The school is effective in promoting community cohesion; it is a very harmonious multi-ethnic community where pupils from a variety of backgrounds are proud to talk about how well everyone gets on with each other. Pupils speak with keenness about their work within the local community and fundraising work for global charities. Their caring attitude to one another, promoted very effectively by staff, helps them to feel safe within school. Pupils say that occasionally friends 'fall out', but it is extremely rare for people to be unkind to one another and if this does happen, they have every confidence that staff will solve any problems. Pupils are also fully aware of issues related to Internet safety. The involvement of older pupils in managing the ordering and distribution of fruit for the school, along with their secure basic skills, means that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good and pupils recognise that 'our teachers work hard to make lessons fun and interesting.' Lessons typically move on at a brisk pace, and teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to enhance learning. Teachers are caring and supportive and in the best lessons work is very precisely tailored for individual pupils. In such cases, pupils make good and often outstanding progress. Most teachers take great care in

marking pupils' books, but there is some variability in the quality of marking across the school. Whilst some staff write very detailed feedback, congratulating and encouraging pupils, in a minority of cases comments are too brief and do not always inform pupils of the next steps for improvement. The curriculum is good and provides many opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across a range of subjects. Pupils particularly enjoy art, drama and music and are very keen to participate in the good range of extra-curricular activities provided. They love to go on school trips, such as those to local museums. Visitors to the school enhance the curriculum, particularly in terms of pupils' personal development. For example, younger pupils were delighted to take part in role play about the work of the dentist, as part of the visit to school by a local health professional.

The school goes to great lengths to ensure that pupils are well cared for and the quality of pastoral care is outstanding. This is particularly evident in support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school works exceptionally well in partnership with external agencies to ensure that the needs of individuals are met. Several parents remarked specifically on this aspect of the school's work through comments such as 'we will be eternally grateful for the extra time and effort that has been made on behalf of my child.' Academic guidance is good and pupils' progress is effectively tracked throughout Key Stages 1 and 2. All requirements relating to the safeguarding of pupils are met.

The opinions of many staff, pupils and parents are summarised in the comment of one parent 'the headteacher is an excellent leader of our school community'. Since the last inspection, the headteacher has continued with her determined drive to take the school forward. She has focused attention on several aspects of provision which has led to greater consistency in the rates of pupils' progress across the school. Senior leaders have a secure overview of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors are highly supportive of the school and play an active role in advising leaders and managers. The school provides good value for money and has good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children's skills on entry to the EYFS vary, but overall they are well below typical age-related expectations. The very good relationships and a strong emphasis on pastoral care, evident elsewhere in the school, are key strengths of provision in the EYFS. Parents very much appreciate the care taken by staff to ensure a smooth transition into the EYFS, and as a result of this good quality support children settle quickly and happily. Leadership and management of the EYFS are satisfactory. The school is in the early stages of implementing aspects of the EYFS strategy, and as a result, systems for assessing children's progress are not yet fully established. There is currently insufficient emphasis on promoting choice of activities for children in the Nursery. This limits the development of independent learning skills for some children. In the Reception class, staff showed that they are skilled in providing intervention in child-led activities to successfully promote the development of speaking and listening. Many children enter Year 1 with skills below those typically expected, and this represents good achievement from their starting points. However, the rate of progress across the EYFS is uneven and children's achievement overall is satisfactory rather than good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Promote greater choice of activities for children in the EYFS in order to encourage independent learning.

- Improve the consistency of teachers' marking so that it is all at least good.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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 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?	2

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

As you know, your school was recently inspected. I would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome and for sharing your views with us. I would also like to share our main findings with you.

You attend a good school. You say that your teachers are kind and caring. This is one of the best things about your school – the staff take excellent care of you. It was great to see that you are so caring to each other, too. Your behaviour is outstanding and you should be very proud of this. I thoroughly enjoyed talking to you, as you were so polite and mature. I was especially impressed with your knowledge of other faiths and cultures!

You make good progress at St Marie's and you do particularly well in science. I know that the staff have been keen to help you develop your speaking and listening skills, and it is obvious that this work has paid off as so many of you are really confident speakers. Another very strong feature of the school's work is the support given to those of you that need a little extra help with learning and also the language support for those of you who are just starting to learn English. This support helps you to achieve well and some of you make fantastic progress.

As part of our work, we usually make some suggestions as to how schools can become even better. I have suggested to your headteacher that the youngest children in St Marie's are given the best possible choice of activities. In Years 1 to 6, most of the marking in your books is good, but I have recommended that the school aims to make sure that all of the marking is at least this good so that all of you know what you need to do to improve.

Your headteacher and all the staff want each one of you to achieve your full potential at St Marie's. I am really pleased that you are proud of your school and enjoy learning, and we wish you well for the future.