

St Vincent's Roman Catholic Primary School, Rochdale

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105831
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	308965
Inspection date	11 December 2007
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 category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	383
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr P Brindle
Headteacher	Mr Eamonn Scott
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2003
School address	Edenfield Road Norden Rochdale Lancashire OL12 7QL
Telephone number	01706 642469
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the impact of teaching on the progress made by pupils, the quality of pupils' personal development and well-being and its impact on learning, and the effectiveness of all levels of leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the analysis of pupils' test results, scrutiny of samples of their work, lesson observations, observations of pupils at break and lunchtime, discussions with pupils, staff and governors, school documentation and parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that 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 large school serves the local parish, with pupils coming from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is lower than that in most schools, as is the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The vast majority of pupils are White British with only a small number from minority ethnic groups; few of these are at an early stage of learning English. The school has been awarded the bronze Eco School award and the information and communication technology (ICT) mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school, which gives excellent value for money. It has a very warm and welcoming atmosphere with bright displays creating a vibrant learning environment. Parents rate the school highly. Comments such as, 'An excellent school with top class teachers who care very much about the well-being of the children' and 'A happy school which nurtures the whole child' typify their views.

Pupils say they thoroughly enjoy school and the wide range of learning experiences presented to them. They think the school is great and say they are proud to attend St Vincent's because it is so highly thought of in the locality. They enjoy excellent relationships with their teachers and their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils say the school has 'a nice atmosphere' in which they feel safe and secure. The excellent pastoral care provided is matched by the high quality academic guidance given to them. Pupils have a very clear awareness of their academic targets and appreciate greatly the way that the teachers' marking of their work helps them to understand how they can improve. They say how much they like their teachers and the way they help them to learn.

A great strength of the school is the way that it fosters pupils' personal development and well-being. They become increasingly mature and sensible as they progress through the school and have excellent attitudes to learning. Older pupils take care of younger ones on the playground. In lessons pupils' caring concern for others is typified by the way that they relate to members of their class with disabilities. They patiently wait for them to complete tasks and generously share in their success. Pupils' collections for charities are further evidence of the level of concern they show for others. Their understanding of the need for healthy lifestyles is outstanding. Pupils play an important part in the life of the school through the work of the school council and are pleased that their views are taken into account. The excellent development of their interpersonal skills together with their very good basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT prepare them very well for the next stage in their education. The close attention given to developing their self-esteem so that they become confident learners is a key factor in the high standards they achieve.

The consequence of this very positive approach to school among pupils is that they achieve outstandingly well. Throughout the school pupils' eager and lively faces in lessons reflect their enthusiasm for learning. The quality of teaching is outstanding and the rich curriculum presents them with an exciting diet of learning experiences. Lessons are very well planned with activities that match pupils' abilities well. Lively, clear explanations, linked to the effective use of questions, ensure that pupils understand what they have to do. Excellent use of interactive whiteboards stimulates pupils. As a result, classrooms are quiet, orderly places where pupils work hard and make very good progress. Children make a very good start in the Reception classes. This rate of progress continues throughout Years 1 and 2 so that, by the end of Year 2, pupils reach standards that are above average in reading, writing and mathematics, and have been so for the last five years. By the end of Year 6, standards are well above national averages overall and, again, have been so during the last five years. The reason for a dip in pupils' performance in English in 2006 was accurately identified. As a result, a determined drive was given to improving the quality of their writing, which was successful in lifting standards in English back to a level well above average in 2007. This reflects the school's determination not to become complacent and the headteacher's avowed goal to enable all pupils to reach the highest standards possible. The school is particularly good at meeting the needs of pupils with

learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the few learning English as an additional language. As a result they make very good progress. Similarly the more capable pupils are suitably challenged and achieve very well as evidenced by the high proportion who achieve the higher Level 5 in national tests at Year 6.

The outstanding leadership and management of the headteacher are vital ingredients in the success of this school. His strong innovative leadership provides a clear direction to the staff who support him very well. Management structures are very well organised. The senior management team includes administration staff and teaching support staff. Staff have been organised into curriculum groups in order to further develop the school's already very good monitoring and evaluation procedures. Coordinators monitor their areas of responsibility closely. The school consequently has a very clear understanding of its performance and is continually striving to improve. Governors are an important part of the team and meet their responsibilities well. They monitor the work of the school closely and provide good support and challenge. Taking all this into account the school has an excellent capacity to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage (Reception Year) is very well led and managed, and provision is excellent. The two classes work together very well and thoughtful induction arrangements ensure that children quickly settle. Teachers and support staff successfully create an attractive, stimulating environment. Classrooms and the indoor and outdoor shared areas are very well organised with all areas of learning covered very well. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. All staff have a very caring approach and children consequently become confident and feel secure. Activities are very well planned and a good balance is made between teacher directed and independent tasks. Close attention is given to developing children's social skills and as a result they quickly establish good learning habits. They move to their activities enthusiastically, displaying very positive attitudes to learning and good levels of independence. Children enter the Reception classes having attended a range of pre-school provision and, as a result, their attainment on entry varies. It is generally broadly similar to but slightly below that expected for their age. They make very good progress and achieve very well. By the end of the Reception year the vast majority of children reach the national expectations for their age and some exceed them.

What the school should do to improve further

This outstanding school knows itself very well and is already taking the steps it has identified to make it even better. As a result, there are no significant areas for improvement.

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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?	1
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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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**

It was a pleasure to visit your school to find out how well you are learning. Thank you for being so friendly and talking to me. I very much enjoyed my day with you and listening to what you had to say. It was very pleasing to hear how proud you are of your school and how you really enjoy learning. I agree with your views and judge St Vincent's RC Primary to be outstanding.

I was very impressed at the warm and welcoming atmosphere in your school and the way the staff take excellent care of you so that you feel safe and happy. This was very clear to me because many of you told me how much you like your teachers and enjoy school. They successfully make learning interesting for you and give you lots of good advice about how you can improve your work. I was also very impressed by the mature approach you have to your learning and how hard you work for your teachers. As a result you make very good progress and reach well above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Your behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent and I was pleased to see how well the older pupils take care of the younger ones. You clearly understand the importance of a healthy diet and how to keep fit and healthy. I was also very pleased to hear that the school listens to your views and has made some changes as a result.

Thank you for helping me so much with the inspection of your school. It is clear that the headteacher and all the staff know exactly how to make sure that your school continues to improve, so I am not asking them to make any specific changes. You can play your part by continuing to work hard and enjoy your schooling.