

St Mary's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105250
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	324190
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Liam Trippier HMI

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	220
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	Father Jones
Headteacher	Mrs Claire Massingham
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Victoria Road Horwich Bolton Lancashire BL6 6EP
Telephone number	01204 333625
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Age group	5–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is an average sized Catholic primary school situated to the north of Bolton. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds and almost all speak English as their first language. An above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities although very few have statements of special educational need. The school has been awarded the Basic Skills Award and is an Investor in People. It has also achieved the financial management in schools standard and is a green flag eco-school.

Extended provision is available for pupils before and after school. That provision was inspected separately, at the same time as the school inspection, and receives a separately written report.

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 that provides an excellent education for its pupils. The care and guidance provided by all staff is a key factor in pupils' academic success. Pupils are confident, happy and eager to learn. The excellent leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher ensures the school is continually evolving and moving forward.

Progress since the last inspection has been excellent with all issues addressed systematically and to a high standard. For example, provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been developed to a high quality and standards in writing have been improved impressively throughout the school.

The vast majority of parents who made their views known to the inspection team expressed high levels of satisfaction and say that their children are very happy at the school. One parent said, 'I consider myself privileged to be a parent of a child at St Mary's.' This view was echoed by many.

Standards have been above average in both key stages for several years and were well above average at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2008. A dip in standards in mathematics at Key Stage 2 in 2007 was responded to rigorously, and inspection evidence and data provided by the school shows all year groups currently making outstanding progress, with standards well above average. Challenging targets are set by the governing body each year, and they are met. Many targets are surpassed due to excellent teaching and early intervention for those pupils at risk of falling behind in their work.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and there are many opportunities for pupils to be active and talk about their learning. Teachers are sensitive to pupils' needs and plan lessons to provide challenge to pupils of all abilities. Interesting resources help to maintain high levels of engagement in lessons. Consequently, pupils make excellent progress and thoroughly enjoy the activities on offer.

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils have a clear understanding of how to live healthily and act safely. Their attendance is good, demonstrating the commitment of pupils and their families to the school and to the importance they place on education. Staff demonstrate a very high level of care for pupils and safeguarding requirements are met fully. The school works well to promote community cohesion but pupils' understanding of different cultures in the wider British community and abroad is not as strong as it should be.

Outstanding leadership and management have ensured a strong focus on the excellent progress of learners. Parents value the headteacher's leadership and her openness in discussing matters with them. Leaders at different levels evaluate the work of the school successfully and this has enabled the school to move forward quickly.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children from a wide variety of settings enter the Reception class with skills and knowledge at expected levels for their age. High quality provision ensures that the majority make good progress. Some make excellent progress. Children's personal development and well-being are excellent. They behave very well in class, taking turns and making sensible choices. They are keen and enthusiastic about their learning and follow routines very well. Children relate well

to their peers and to adults, enjoying each other's company and taking every opportunity to talk, share and learn. Children are supported very well in their learning. They achieve highly when they tackle activities, whether these are chosen by children or directed by staff. The excellent learning environment supports their development and enables both spontaneous and carefully planned work to occur side by side. Children work and play with sustained interest and motivation in all activities. In one excellent lesson, children enjoyed making animals from clay, wrote about them with enthusiasm and played with toys in an imaginary zoo for a considerable time, using excellent vocabulary choices. The children thoroughly enjoyed the activities and made excellent progress. Volunteers and teaching assistants monitored activities carefully and ensured the teacher received their assessments to inform future planning. Children's welfare is promoted extremely well. Staff display a very high level of care and concern for children's well-being. Consequently, children are confident and secure and this provides a firm foundation from which they can continue to make good progress.

What the school should do to improve further

The school has correctly identified most areas in which it can improve further however it should also:

- Improve pupils' understanding of different British and global communities through more effective promotion of community cohesion.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards at Key Stage 1 have been above average for several years. Pupils make very good progress to reach their full potential. At Key Stage 2, standards are well above average with the vast majority of pupils achieving, and some surpassing, their challenging targets. Detailed analysis by inspectors of the school's assessment and tracking records, pupils' workbooks and evidence from lesson observations across the school shows that current standards have strengthened further with outstanding progress evident in English, mathematics and science. Learners from different backgrounds and those identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve equally well. Rigorous and systematic monitoring of pupils' performance has enabled early and precise interventions to occur where underachievement has been identified. This ensures that pupils of all abilities receive the high quality help they need to improve. The school's successful strategies to improve pupils' writing have resulted in a rise in attainment across the school as pupils make significant progress in their writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is excellent overall, as exemplified by the qualities pupils display on a regular basis. They play an active part in collective worship and reflect on their actions showing a keen sense of right and wrong. Pupils' cultural development is good, particularly regarding their understanding of art and literature. However, some pupils lack awareness of the realities of living in a multicultural society and of different countries' customs. All learners enjoy school thoroughly, as shown by their good attendance, punctuality and excellent behaviour. They show excellent attitudes to learning, working cooperatively in groups and spontaneously applauding the efforts of others, to show their appreciation. Pupils act sensibly and they are well aware of safety issues. When they walk to the local arena for tuition in sport they take

good care of each other. They show a good level of awareness of how important it is to be active. Pupils show high levels of responsibility through regular fund-raising for charities and involvement in the school council. Pupils enjoy interviewing candidates for new teaching posts in the school and are proud to be part of the selection process. Pupils are very well informed of environmental issues. There is an extremely active eco-club of which a high proportion of pupils are members and they meet regularly. Pupils are very well prepared for their future because of their high level of skills in numeracy, literacy, information and communication technology (ICT). They also demonstrate a flair for enterprise in the 'Crafty Enterprise Club' where pupils run a crafts business with adults to make items for different celebrations to sell in school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teachers show strong subject knowledge and carefully plan activities to meet the wide range of abilities in their classes, using information from assessments well. They use interactive whiteboards skilfully with a good range of other resources to maintain pupils' interest and ensure learners are active in lessons. In a Year 5 literacy lesson, to produce a class newsletter, groups of pupils questioned their peers about visits and activities the class had embarked on. There was challenge for different abilities and a clear role for all. Writing and questioning skills were developed highly successfully and confidence was gained when taking turns to speak in front of others. In all the lessons observed, the needs of every individual were of paramount importance in teachers' planning. Support provided by high quality teaching assistants was extremely effective in ensuring that this planning bore fruit and that all individuals made at least good progress. Teachers have high expectations and work hard and successfully for their pupils. As a consequence pupils enjoy lessons very much, behave impeccably and make excellent progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is wide ranging and inclusive. The school has made excellent links with partner institutions, such as the local sports arena to enhance what is offered in physical education, and with local artists and poets to provide a rich and varied curriculum. Consequently, the curriculum makes an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development as they are involved in community projects, eco-school activities and actively demonstrate their understanding of healthy and safe lifestyles. The performance of different groups of pupils is monitored rigorously with tracking from entry and analysis of progress on a regular and individual pupil basis. This information is used to provide high levels of challenge for future work across the full range of curriculum subjects. Provision for numeracy, literacy and ICT is excellent and continually improving as it is increasingly embedded across the different subjects of the curriculum. Extra-curricular provision is outstanding and pupils speak highly of the benefits of such an extensive programme of clubs. Take-up levels are high and, impressively, the school monitors the impact of this to ensure all pupils access what is on offer.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. It is a major strength of the school and lies at the heart of what makes St Mary's such a wonderful place for pupils to grow, develop and learn. Child protection, safeguarding and risk assessment procedures are fully in place. Where necessary, the school involves outside agencies to support its work, such as with vulnerable pupils. The school is a strong, supportive community. It encourages good attendance and punctuality and it ensures that pupils feel they are well known and cared for at all times. Transition between key stages is excellent and this means that pupils' rates of learning are maintained. Academic guidance has improved considerably since the previous inspection and is now excellent. Pupils know their levels of performance and receive clear direction in knowing how to improve. The school works very successfully in promoting links with parents through regular contact, especially via its excellent website.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher's vision ensures children are valued, respected and happy, and that they are developing skills as lifelong learners. The Catholic ethos of the school contributes effectively to this, for example, in the quality of collective worship and on the outstanding personal development and well-being of the pupils.

The school knows itself well. This is because staff use information about pupils' performance intelligently to identify strengths and weaknesses. Leaders at different levels regularly observe lessons, examine pupils' work and teachers' planning. This high quality self-evaluation leads to effective plans that drive the improvements the school is making. Senior leaders challenge and support staff to ensure that standards are high for learners and make sure that they are maintained over time. The question, 'So what?' is asked regularly about the findings from monitoring processes, to ensure that actions lead to improvements in outcomes for pupils. Governors are well aware of their responsibilities and have a very good knowledge of governance and how the school works. They visit school when learners are working and support the school exceptionally well. Governors are enthusiastic and yet hold the school rigorously to account for its performance.

The school environment is continually improving under the direction of the senior leaders. It is of a very high standard and children and adults appreciate the high quality premises where they learn and work. The track record of the school demonstrates that its capacity to improve is outstanding. This is due to the strong leadership, excellent curriculum, thoughtful and detailed future plans, high quality staff and excellent care, guidance and support. The school offers excellent value for money because resources and staff are deployed very well to fully meet pupils' needs.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

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	1
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	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 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

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 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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

Thank you for making Mr Bannon and myself so welcome when we inspected your school recently. We very much appreciated your support and help. The report is now complete and I would like to tell you what it contains.

Here are some of the things we found.

- St Mary's is an outstanding school.
- All the staff take very good care of you.
- You behave exceptionally well.
- You work hard and make excellent progress.
- You feel safe and happy in school.
- You know how to live healthily.

However outstanding a school is, it can always improve. I have asked Mrs Massingham to make sure you learn more about different cultures and other countries so you can appreciate the similarities and differences between your lives

and others.

You have all done very well and I wish you all the best for the future. Remember to play your part too, by turning up to school every day and continuing to work hard.