

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Radcliffe

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105353
Local Authority	Bury
Inspection number	324208
Inspection date	11 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael Onyon

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)	426
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	Iris Turner
Headteacher	Mr Paul Heaton
Date of previous school inspection	11 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Belgrave Street Radcliffe Manchester Lancashire M26 4DG

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	11 February 2009
Inspection number	324208

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Age group 3-11

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- pupils' achievement, particularly in mathematics
- pupils' personal development and well-being, and the quality of care and support
- the impact on learning of the academic guidance offered to pupils
- the impact of leadership and management.

Evidence was gathered from performance data and other school documentation, observations of teaching and learning, the work produced by pupils, parents' questionnaires, and discussions with pupils, staff and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail. The inspectors found that the judgements made in the school's self-evaluation form were justified and these have been included, where appropriate, in this report.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school which serves a mixed social area. The vast majority of the pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The proportion of pupils eligible to receive a free school meal is below average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the integrated Nursery and Reception classes. The school has gained the Healthy Schools, Activemark and Quality Mark awards.

Extended provision is available for pupils 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: 2

St. Mary's is a good school. It has made steady improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which has benefited from the strong impact of integrating the Nursery and Reception classes. Pupils are friendly and well mannered; they are proud of their school. Parents appreciate the excellent pastoral care provided by the staff, saying the school helps their children to grow in confidence.

Pupils achieve well. They make good progress, overall, from their starting points, which are below those expected for their age on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage, to reach above average standards, particularly in English and science, by the time they leave for secondary school. By the end of Year 2, most pupils have reached standards that are average overall and above in reading, making at least steady gains on their previous learning. Standards in mathematics, by Year 6, slipped below average in 2008; the school is currently addressing identified weaknesses and tracking data indicates that current Year 6 pupils are on course to reach their challenging targets. However, inspection evidence demonstrates that standards in mathematics in Key Stage 2 are not as good as those in English and science and that fewer pupils reach the higher level (Level 5) in this subject. As a result of comprehensive support from both teachers and teaching assistants, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same good progress and achieve as well as their peers.

Pupils feel safe and secure because, in their words, 'Everyone is friendly here and we all try to make new pupils happy when they arrive.' Indeed 'the buddy corner', play leaders and the school council do much to support younger pupils and to make sure they can take full advantage of everything the school has to offer. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their behaviour is good and they have a sensitive regard for both their classmates and for the adults who work with them. They are always concerned, through a number of projects, to take care of the environment. For example, pupils have awards for walking and cycling to school and grow produce in their own allotment. They benefit from a variety of visitors to the school and from developing links with schools in other countries. They have a good awareness of religions and cultures different to their own. They have an excellent understanding of why it is important to eat healthily and to keep fit. As result of the school's rigorous efforts, attendance has improved. It is average and rising. Pupils arrive punctually, eager for the challenges of the day ahead. Their good academic achievement and the school's emphasis on supporting them fully when they transfer to high school demonstrate that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have high expectations of what their pupils can do and the challenges they set are generally realistic and encourage pupils to think deeply about the subject matter. In the best lessons, teachers encourage pupils to justify their answers and also encourage them to work in pairs and groups in order that they can use their classmates as another resource for learning. While the marking of pupils work is undertaken conscientiously, sometimes opportunities are missed to offer guidance as to how pupils might improve their work.

The curriculum is good and makes an impressive contribution to pupils' personal and social development. Teachers are placing increasing emphasis on encouraging their pupils to see links between different subjects, through 'topic' days such as one recently based upon life in Africa, for example, and key skills are given appropriate emphasis. The quality and extent of

extra-curricular and enrichment activities are good; for example, from 'Lets get cooking,' and a boys' reading club to a good range of sports and activity sessions. Older pupils enjoy their annual residential experiences in North Wales, where they are encouraged to enjoy learning outside the formal classroom and tackle challenging physical pursuits.

In the words of parents, 'The school provides an environment in which pupils feel safe and looked after and which gives them confidence to learn.' Care and support are excellent. Led by the assistant headteacher the talented team of learning assistants does all it can to make sure that pupils, who sometimes find their work difficult and those identified as vulnerable, feel valued. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are rigorous and fully meet current guidelines. Academic guidance does not always offer pupils a clear understanding of how they can improve and, as a result, some are not fully aware of their current performance and of what they need to do to improve their standards, particularly in mathematics.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides excellent leadership, ensuring that a clear vision for school development is shared by the strong staff team. He has successfully overseen an improvement in the involvement of leaders in monitoring the pupils' progress. The school's community is served well and there are good opportunities for most pupils. Equality of opportunity is promoted well and pupils have a good understanding of cultures other than their own. Governors are supportive of the school but are not afraid to challenge leaders, if they feel it is necessary to do so. The school promotes community cohesion well through its work in the local community and by ensuring that pupils have a secure awareness of cultural diversity. Without doubt, St Mary's Primary is a thinking school, in which self-evaluation is accurate and in which continuous review of performance is the norm. It strives to develop the whole child and recognises the inextricable link between personal development and academic success. It provides good value for money and has good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The good, committed leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage means that there is a sharp focus on the children achieving well with a particular emphasis on the development of their personal and emotional skills. Most children reach levels expected as they enter Year 1 and their progress is good. Detailed assessments provide accurate measures of children's strengths and weaknesses and teachers use them effectively to plan activities at just the right level. Good teaching and careful curriculum planning ensures children have the right balance of work to improve their academic skills as well as time to develop their independence and social skills through structured play. For example, using the traditional stories of Little Red Riding Hood and The Gingerbread Man, children baked cakes, constructed walls and acted out dramas in full costume. Consequently, they worked with enthusiasm and sustained concentration. Staff make the best use of resources providing the children with a safe and stimulating learning environment in which they enjoy learning. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has a clear vision of how to develop provision further. She has ensured that all the welfare requirements are met and that children's progress is monitored closely. Staff have established excellent relationships with parents and outside agencies, enabling children to make a smooth transition. These contribute to the high quality care children receive.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics in Key Stage 2, particularly for those pupils who demonstrate the potential to reach the higher level in this subject.

- Ensure that all pupils receive the advice they need to understand what they need to do to improve their work.

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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?	2
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?	2
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?	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?	2

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/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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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 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	2
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**

Thank you so much for your warm welcome during the recent inspection. You were all so friendly and polite. We are particularly grateful to the pupils who came to talk to us at lunchtime. We would now like to share with you the really good things about your school.

St. Mary's Primary is a good school and you are rightly proud to attend it. You look after each other so well and also recognise your duties to preserve the environment and to celebrate other cultures which are different to your own. You are modest about your awards for walking and cycling to school. Your behaviour is good and you treat visitors with dignity and respect. Many of you support younger pupils through your school council and the play leaders; you try hard to make school even better.

You make good progress in lessons because your teachers teach you well. The care and support you get from all the staff is excellent and your learning assistants do everything they can to help those of you who sometimes find the work difficult. You know how to eat healthily and know that it is also very important to keep fit. This is why you take part in so many games and sports. You enjoy the many activities outside the classroom and also the strong links you have with other schools and with schools in other countries.

Your headteacher and all the other staff work hard to make your school as good as it is and they are always trying to improve things. I have asked them to try and make sure that your standards in mathematics improve in Key Stage 2 so that more of you reach Level 5 at the end of Year 6. I have also asked them to ensure that all of you receive the advice you need to understand how to improve your work.

Thank you again for your contribution to the inspection. Please keep working hard, looking after each other and enjoying school.