

St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Bamford

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105813
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	324275
Inspection date	26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Kathleen McArthur

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	219
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 David Symonds
Headteacher	Mrs Gillian Rhodes
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Bury and Rochdale Old Road Heywood Lancashire OL10 4BB
Telephone number	01706 369339

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	26 February 2009
Inspection number	324275

Fax number

01706 625295

Age group	4-11
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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; the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the impact of the revised curriculum and the school's actions to promote community cohesion. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published and school assessment data and classroom observations. Discussions were held with staff, pupils and governors, and parents' questionnaires were scrutinised. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, given in its self-evaluation, were not justified.

Description of the school

This average-sized primary school is on the edge of the borough of Rochdale. The area is socially and economically advantaged and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. Most pupils are of White British heritage and all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is low in comparison with the national average. The Early Years Foundation Stage provides a Reception class.

The school has achieved numerous awards, including the Healthy Schools Award in three successive years, Princess Diana Anti-bullying Awards also in three successive years, Eco-School Bronze Award, and achieved Extended Schools Status in November 2008.

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 outstanding school successfully promotes excellence and enjoyment in every area of its work. Excellent leadership has created a harmonious learning environment where pupils clearly feel very secure and happy. The school has a very good reputation locally and welcomes parents as partners. Parents commented positively about many aspects of the school, saying it is welcoming, provides their children with a good blend of care, moral values and respect, and ensures that they gain in confidence, progress well and reach high standards.

Achievement is outstanding. Pupils make excellent progress throughout the school and reach well above average standards by the time they leave. Key Stage 1 pupils build on the excellent start made in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They consistently reach significantly above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. This excellent progress continues through Key Stage 2 where pupils often exceed their targets and a large proportion reach the higher level in all subjects; in 2008, school data show that almost two thirds attained the higher level in science. Excellent provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables them to progress as well as their classmates. The school is quick to act on any slippage, for example, when fewer pupils reached the higher levels in writing in 2007, the school implemented rigorous actions that led to a dramatic increase in 2008.

Outstanding provision for personal development and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development results in mature, thoughtful and reliable pupils who participate enthusiastically in all activities. Excellent behaviour contributes strongly to outstanding achievement. Pupils adjust their behaviour appropriately in different situations, for example entering assembly in a quiet and reverent manner and using the stairs with care. High attendance levels show that pupils really enjoy and value their education. They have very secure understanding of caring for their health through diet and exercise. Pupils think the school's '6 Golden Rules' that outline the clear code of behaviour are fair and keep them safe. Some parents expressed concerns about bullying, but the inspection found that instances have been rigorously addressed and robust systems established to deal with any future problems. Pupils say bullying is not a problem and they are confident that staff listen to and act on their concerns. School councillors and Playground Friends relish their roles and pupils are trustworthy and keen to accept responsibilities. Participation in church and parish activities, Heywood's Remembrance Day Parade and the Festival of Music, Speech and Drama enable pupils to contribute to the community while broadening their cultural experiences most effectively. In addition, they meet different cultures, faiths and lifestyles, successfully extending the school's excellent impact on community cohesion. Outstanding academic and personal skills give pupils an excellent foundation for their next steps in education and future life.

Consistently strong teaching occurs throughout the school. Lessons are lively and well planned, based on teachers' secure subject knowledge and excellent use of assessment information. Staff set high expectations that inspire and challenge pupils of all abilities and pupils know they are expected to work hard. As one said, 'It's a Golden Rule, we don't waste time.' The excellent curriculum is very rich, broad and extremely well balanced. It is suitably adapted for pupils of all abilities and provides an excellent programme of personal development. Parents and pupils speak enthusiastically about the wide range of extra activities and clubs. An ongoing revision of the curriculum is successfully linking subjects and making learning even more meaningful. For example, Year 2 pupils used and extended their literacy, information and communication technology, history, drama and thinking skills while researching Florence

Nightingale. Some global links are established but these are not yet fully embedded to complete leadership's aim of providing a 'world-class' curriculum.

Staff track and monitor pupils' academic progress rigorously and skilfully direct support where it is needed. Pupils say teachers' marking shows them how to improve their work. They know their targets and Year 6 pupils report that they check for weaker areas and set their own targets, encouraging high levels of involvement, independence and responsibility. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet all current requirements and pupils are extremely well cared for.

The school does not rest on its previous successes but constantly seeks ways to develop and improve provision for every pupil. The highly skilled leadership team has an unwavering vision for continuous improvement. Excellent governance brings a range of additional skills and expertise that governors use very effectively to support and challenge the school and hold it to account. Arrangements for equal opportunities are first-rate. This school knows itself very well. Meticulous self-evaluation results in well-focused action plans, professional development and shrewd budget management, which gives excellent value for money. Issues from the previous inspection have been tackled thoroughly, along with an ongoing programme of building development, greater parental involvement and wider partnerships with the community and external agencies. Consequently, the school has an outstanding capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children enter the Reception class with skills above those typical for their age. They are eager to learn and settle quickly in the safe, secure environment. Strong staff teamwork provides excellent welfare arrangements and parents are very pleased with the support and care their children receive. Outstanding leadership ensures that teaching is of the highest quality. A particularly strong feature of the teaching is the skilful use of questions that reinforce children's learning while at the same time developing their confidence and self-esteem. Children really enjoy the stimulating problem-solving activities that make learning fun for them. They play and learn happily and cooperatively both indoors and in the well-planned outdoor area, busily exploring the exciting array of stimulating learning activities provided by the excellent curriculum. Thorough assessment and monitoring of each child ensures that they make excellent progress in all areas of learning. When they move to Year 1, most children are working above, and some well above, the learning goals for their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Complete the review of the global aspects of the curriculum.

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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 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?	1
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	1
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	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 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?	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	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**

I would like to thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspectors during our visit. We really enjoyed meeting you, sharing your assembly, visiting your lessons and listening to the brass band. Everyone was very friendly, polite and helpful. We could see that you are proud and happy to be members of the school, and you told us about many things that you really enjoy.

This letter is to tell you what we found.

Everything about your school is outstanding! In particular, we judged as outstanding:

- the leaders, staff and governors
- the Early Years Foundation Stage
- your personal development and well-being
- the rich curriculum and all the extra activities, especially sports and music
- the way you are cared for, guided and supported.

We could see that you love learning, work very hard and your parents can be proud of your excellent behaviour. You make excellent progress and reach standards well above those usual for your age. We were very impressed by the way you care for each other, act sensibly and responsibly in school and take part in so many activities with the church and the local community.

We have asked the school to complete the review of the curriculum so you gain even more knowledge of the wider world.