

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Sabden

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119651
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313372
Inspection dates	11–12 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Geoffrey Yates

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	59
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Boylan
Headteacher	Mrs Claire Westwell
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2003
School address	Watt Street Sabden Clitheroe Lancashire BB7 9ED
Telephone number	01282 771009
Fax number	01282 680095

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school serves a rural area of mostly private housing situated in the village of Sabden. Most pupils come from this area. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. All pupils speak English as their first language. From 2005 to 2007 the school did not have a substantive headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory and improving standard of education. Being a small school means that everyone knows everyone else which, at St Mary's, is fostering very positive relationships and a work environment that is conducive for learning. The relatively new headteacher has quickly and accurately identified the right things to ensure the school moves forward. Under her determined and energetic leadership, with the strong support of staff and governors, many improvements have been made and the school has a good capacity to improve further. The school's caring Christian ethos and attention to the needs of each individual pupil, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, contribute to pupils' good personal development. The high level of care and support pupils receive is a major strength, but opportunities to guide pupils through marking are sometimes missed. Parents are very supportive of the school with one parent summing up the views of many, 'After an extremely unsettled couple of years I am happy to say the new headteacher is doing a great job. My children now love school.'

Pupils enter Key Stage 1 with standards typical for their age. They make satisfactory progress overall in English, mathematics and science in Key Stages 1 and 2. The school's results of assessments and tests in Key Stages 1 and 2 are average, although variations in the proportions of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities affect the pattern of results. Standards in writing are below average but the school's actions to raise standards in this area are having a positive impact on pupils' progress in lessons.

Pupils enjoy being at school, get on well with everybody and say that they feel safe and valued as individuals; they have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils' behaviour is good in and out of classes. Pupils understand the importance of staying healthy and enjoy taking part in regular exercise. For example, sporting initiatives after school are much looked forward to and enjoyed by pupils of all ages. Older pupils enjoy helping younger children and those on the school council take their responsibilities very seriously.

Teaching, learning and the curriculum are satisfactory. Teachers work very well with support staff in ensuring that lessons are suitably challenging and pupils are managed well. Detailed information about pupils' past performance and their progress is only recently available to help teachers plan work. It has yet to be used systematically to set targets for the pupils. The curriculum is enhanced by the use of visiting specialist teachers and good use is made of theme weeks and visits to make learning more interesting.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. After a period of instability, staffing is now much more settled. The headteacher has taken decisive action to start to bring about improvement. Classes have been reorganised and early reading skills are now taught well. An improved system of tracking pupils' progress is showing staff what needs to be done to improve pupils' performance. Governance is satisfactory. The school provides satisfactory value for money and is well placed to move forward.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Very good induction arrangements, including home visits, help children settle in well. Children start school with skills that are typical for their age. By the time they leave Reception, they have made satisfactory progress and standards are in line with national expectations in all areas

of learning. This is because teaching is satisfactory and focussed firmly on children's individual needs. At times there is not a good balance between children learning to take the initiative themselves in what they do, and teachers directing their learning for them. Children share a class with pupils in Years 1 and 2, which the school has managed well through the effective teamwork of the class teacher and teaching assistant. Planning is satisfactory, enabling children to benefit from all areas of learning and better use is beginning to be made of assessment information. Children enjoy and make good progress in developing their early reading skills. More effective use needs to be made of the outside area to support children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in pupils' writing.
- Ensure that assessment information is used effectively to plan the next stages in pupils' learning.
- Sharpen the guidance to pupils about what to do next to improve their work.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils start in Year 1 having attained the standards expected for their age in all areas of learning. They make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and 2 and reach average standards overall by the time they leave school at the end of Year 6. The weakest aspect of their attainment is in writing, where weaknesses have not been identified in the past. This lack of achievement in writing is being tackled by the school and the work seen in pupils' books and during lessons show that their progress is improving, although standards remain below average. The school's results of assessments and tests at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2 confirm this picture of standards and achievement. In 2007, for example, the school met its targets in mathematics but not in English. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same progress as other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. One child when asked what he/she liked most about the school replied, 'our school thinks about other people who are not as lucky as we are'. Attendance levels are above average because pupils are happy to come to school and enjoy their education. Their enjoyment of school was there for all to see in the way they performed the school's Christmas concert in front of a packed hall of parents and friends of the school during the inspection. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibility and often do so without adult direction, for example, by looking after young children in the playground. Their involvement in helping to set targets to help them improve their academic work is at an early stage. Behaviour is good. Pupils develop a good understanding of how to keep safe and of the dangers of drug misuse. They understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and are very appreciative of the sporting activities that are on offer after school. There are good links with the community and the church that successfully promote social skills. Pupils are proud of being members of the recently introduced school council and talk enthusiastically about their plans for a healthy tuck shop. Weaknesses in the acquisition of writing skills mean that despite

strengths in other associated areas preparation for life after school is satisfactory rather than good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Lessons run smoothly and classrooms are managed well with good support provided by teaching assistants. Lessons are usually pitched at the right level and the teaching successfully meets the needs of pupils from different age groups. Occasionally, question and answer sessions are not geared sufficiently enough to meet the wide range of abilities in the class. Where teaching is good, it engages pupils in meaningful dialogue that encourages pupils to really think out their responses and justify their opinions. A key weakness in the past has been the lack of up-to-date assessment information to help teachers plan lessons; this issue has now been addressed and teachers have the data at hand to help prepare challenging lessons for all groups of pupils. When pupils' work is marked, opportunities to give pupils guidance on how to improve their work are sometimes missed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Good use is made of visiting teachers who specialise in music and information and communication technology to ensure pupils have a balanced curriculum. The school has started to link subjects together to make learning more meaningful but it is too early for these changes to have had an impact on raising standards. Some opportunities are provided for pupils to use their writing skills in other subjects but the school recognises that this aspect of curriculum provision needs to be improved. There is a good range of activities that enrich the curriculum. These include theme weeks, charity events, and visits to places of interest that reinforce the work that has been done in school. For a school of this size, pupils have good opportunities to take part in out-of-school sport as well as music, for example, by learning to play the recorder.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good pastoral support within a caring Christian ethos. Statutory requirements to safeguard pupils are in place. Pupils feel safe and secure in school telling the inspector that, 'Teachers are always there to help us.' Child protection requirements and procedures are clear and understood by all staff. Health and safety procedures are properly underpinned by risk assessments, enabling pupils to undertake activities safely both on and off school premises. Parents are right in their view that the school takes good personal care of their children. The school has good procedures to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties. Action has been taken to improve assessment procedures but the use of the information provided to teachers is still fairly basic and is not yet truly effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school is led and managed by a headteacher who has quickly identified the right things to move this school forward, Pupils' progress is now being tracked more effectively and there are clear signs of improvement, for example in the development of early reading skills. Teamwork among staff is particularly strong because the determined leadership of headteacher has involved all members of staff in the common purpose of wanting to move the school forward. Very positive relationships have been developed with parents and partner institutions, which benefit pupils' personal development and learning. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The school judges its effectiveness to be good and this is understandable in the light of the improvements it is making, particularly with regard to the way classes are organised and the development of pupil tracking systems. However, the impact of improvements on pupils' progress is only just beginning to show through and procedures are not yet robust enough to justify this judgement. Governors are committed to the school, with many having considerable professional expertise. They are highly supportive of the headteacher and focused on bringing about 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?	3
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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is 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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

14 December 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Sabden, Lancashire, BB7 9ED

What a friendly school you attend! Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to visit you. I enjoyed listening to what you had to say about your school and was pleased to hear how much you like school. It was great to see you all taking part in the Christmas productions and to see how well you all get on together in the playground and around school. I agree with you that your teachers are kind and helpful and that they care for you and listen to what you have to say.

The school makes sure you are safe and all members of staff are really helpful when problems arise. I was pleased to see that younger pupils are developing their reading skills well. However, some children are not doing as well as they should in writing and I have asked your school to work hard to improve the quality of your writing. Your school now has a good system in place that shows how well you are doing in English and mathematics. I want you to help your teachers make sure that if it shows you are not doing as well as you should, that something is done about it quickly.

Most of all I want you to really try your best at all times and continue to enjoy all the opportunities that your school offers you.

Good luck and very best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Geoffrey Yates

Lead inspector