

Holy Souls Roman Catholic Primary School Blackburn

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119517
Local Authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	313322
Inspection date	28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	David Earley

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	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss Margaret Wells
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Davies
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2004
School address	Wilworth Crescent Blackburn Lancashire BB1 8QN
Telephone number	01254 249892
Fax number	01254 247383

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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 quality of teaching throughout the school; progress in Key Stage 1; the effectiveness of assessment and tracking in helping to raise standards. Evidence was gathered from the observations of lessons, discussions with staff, pupils and governors; examining pupils' work, school assessment data and documentation including the school's self-evaluation. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school on the outskirts of Blackburn. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils are of White British backgrounds. A small number of pupils learn English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has achieved the Silver Artsmark, the Healthy Schools Award and the Sports Activemark.

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. A significant factor in this is the excellent leadership of the headteacher, who together with the extremely strong team of staff and governors, leads a relentless drive to raise standards and improve provision. One parent expressed a typical view in commenting that her child attends 'an excellent school receiving education of the highest standard'.

Achievement for all pupils, whatever their background or ability, is excellent and standards are significantly above average. The excellent start to school life children receive in the Foundation Stage is consolidated in Key Stage 1. The teacher assessments at the end of Year 2, in reading, writing and mathematics, for the three years preceding 2007 were significantly above average. They dipped to broadly average in 2007 because attainment on entry was generally not as high as in previous years. Standards for the current Year 2 are well above average. In Key Stage 2, based on the very firm foundations of learning in previous years, the rate of progress accelerates. Results of national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2007 in English, mathematics and science were significantly above average and this has been the case for the past three years. In the current Year 6, pupils are expected to sustain these exceptionally high standards. At both key stages the progress and achievement of boys in mathematics lags behind that of girls. The school has strategies in place to improve this but their impact has yet to be realised.

A significant factor in the high achievement is the excellent personal development. Pupils love coming to school because relationships are excellent and learning is fun and challenging. This helps them to develop high self-esteem and to approach learning confidently. A parent reflected the widely held view that the school 'nurtures each child's talent whatever that may be'.

Attendance is above average. Most pupils have an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and are full of life, bright eyed and eager to learn. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, reflecting the Christian values of the school. Pupils have many opportunities to accept responsibility and contribute to the school and wider community, and there are excellent levels of participation in community and parish events. Pupils' high levels of basic skills, maturity and confidence prepare them exceptionally well for the next stage in their education.

Teaching is excellent overall. A strong feature of teaching is the excellent use made of assessment to provide work which is suited to differing abilities. In the excellent lessons seen during the inspection, teaching was inspirational and challenging and captured the imagination of pupils so that they wanted to learn. In Year 2, the teacher made excellent use of pupils' interest in recent earthquakes to extend their skills in understanding non-fiction texts. In Year 6, the teacher's subject knowledge, high expectations, energy and infectious enthusiasm made the learning about different types of averages irresistible. Parents frequently refer to the excellent quality of teaching and the caring nature of the staff. The school makes very good use of support staff to support and extend the learning of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils who learn English as an additional language are also very well supported, so that they make the same rate of progress as their peers.

Pupils want to learn because the curriculum is excellent. It is very well adapted to the needs of all abilities and ages and enrichment is especially good. There is a very wide range of visits and visitors and a very popular provision of extra-curricular activities. A particular strength of the school lies in its provision for the creative arts. The school makes very effective use of specialist

teachers of drama, art, French, physical education and music. These help to widen horizons and deepen understanding. The very strong focus on literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) coupled with very good links with outside agencies such as businesses and other schools greatly enhance the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The very close links with parents and families create a very strong family atmosphere in school. Pupils know that they are very well cared for and well known. This is enhanced by the school's central position in the parish and helps to give pupils a real sense of belonging. This feeling secure and valued is epitomised in the school's mission statement, imaginatively represented by the different parts of a flower. Child protection and risk assessment procedures are in place and the school carefully follows government recommendations for safeguarding children. Very effective assessment and tracking systems enable teachers and pupils to know clearly what they need to do in order to improve.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher, very well supported by her deputy, has a very clear vision for improvement and strong commitment to raising standards and improving provision. Parents are overwhelmingly positive in their views of the school and one parent, speaking for many, commented on how the senior management team, 'are particularly dynamic and positive in their approach'. As part of its extremely thorough self-evaluation, every aspect of provision is analysed and developments prioritised. The school improvement plan is clear and comprehensive. Because the school is very self-critical it tends to be too modest in its grading of aspects of school life because it feels rightly that there is always something to improve or refine. Governance is excellent. Governors know the school extremely well and are very supportive. This is enhanced by the very close links each governor has with a group of pupils as they progress through the school. Governors are very well placed to hold the school to account for its performance because they know the school so well. There has been excellent progress since the previous inspection. Exemplary leadership, a shared and cohesive drive to improve and excellent evaluation of performance give the school excellent capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage is very effective. Children get off to a flying start and establish a very firm foundation for future learning. When children enter the Foundation Stage (Reception) their attainment varies from year to year but is usually above typical expectations. They make very rapid progress and are well launched on reading, writing and mathematics so that by the end of the Foundation Stage, most are already working at standards expected in Year 1. Teaching is excellent. Children enjoy the wide range of challenging tasks because they are interesting and well-suited to their abilities. Relationships are excellent and there are very close links with parents. This enables children to settle in very quickly and to become increasingly confident and independent. There is a very purposeful, happy and challenging atmosphere in which children thrive. Children are eager to learn and build securely on previous skills because the curriculum is extremely well planned and stimulating. The Foundation Stage is well managed and teachers keep very careful check of children's progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the standards reached by boys in mathematics.

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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	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 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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

29 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holy Souls Roman Catholic Primary School Blackburn, Lancashire, BB1 8QN

You helped to make me feel really welcome when I visited you recently. Thank you very much. Your school is outstanding and you are right to tell me that you are very proud of it.

You have an excellent understanding of the importance of diet and exercise in helping to keep healthy. I was very impressed by the way everyone knows and cares for each other. The school council and Buddies do an exceptional job in helping to make the school a better place. Your behaviour is really good and, for example, you are all sensible in moving around the school whilst the building works are in progress. Your school is a very happy place to be.

These are some of the things your school does well:

- you work hard and do really well at your work
- there are lots of interesting visits, visitors, clubs and these help your learning
- the school keeps a careful check on how well you are doing to help you improve
- the school is a very caring place, like a big family, so you feel very well looked after
- the headteacher, teachers and governors work very well together to help to improve your learning and provide the best for each one of you.

This is one of the things I have suggested that the school might do to get even better.

- Help many of the boys to improve their work in mathematics.

I really enjoyed my visit and thank you again for making me so welcome.

Yours sincerely

David Earley

Lead inspector