

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Radcliffe

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105353
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	377231
Inspection dates	26–27 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Kathleen McArthur

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	460
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Iris Turner
Headteacher	Paul Heaton
Date of previous school inspection	11 February 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed 18 lessons taught by 15 teachers and met with parents and carers, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at safeguarding procedures and documentation including school and national data on pupils' progress, policies, development plans, local authority reports and samples of pupils' work. Questionnaires from staff and pupils and the 125 returned by parents and carers were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The impact of strategies to raise attainment in mathematics.
- The challenge offered to pupils in lessons.
- The guidance given to pupils to help them improve their work.
- How well leaders and managers evaluate the work of the school and plan for improvements.

Information about the school

St Mary's Roman Catholic School is much larger than most primary schools. Pupils come from the whole of Radcliffe borough and the number on roll has increased significantly since the last inspection. The great majority are of White British heritage, with a small number from minority ethnic groups and a few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average and the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to that found nationally.

The school holds Healthy School status and has gained various awards including International Schools, a Basic Skills Quality Mark and an Activemark.

A privately run out-of-school club operates on site. This did not form part of this inspection but a report of its quality can be found on the Ofsted website.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Pupils enjoy school and achieve well, and their good behaviour contributes strongly to good learning. They feel extremely safe and are cared for well. 'We are well looked after' and, 'Everyone is friendly and everyone has friends' were typical comments. Pupils have outstanding knowledge of health matters, make an excellent contribution to the community and show high levels of concern for others. Almost all the questionnaires returned by parents and carers were extremely positive and supportive of the school because their children are very happy and progress well.

All groups of pupils achieve well. Children start school with skills below those typically expected for their age, particularly in language and communication. The Early Years Foundation Stage gives them a good start. Pupils progress well through the school and reach the levels expected for their age by the time they leave. Most pupils have a secure knowledge of basic number concepts. Limited reading comprehension skills mean many struggle to solve mathematical problems, and this reduces attainment at the higher level in English and mathematics. Well-organised, skilled support enables pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the small number learning English as an additional language to progress well in relation to their starting points and capabilities.

Good teaching captures pupils' enthusiasm so they are keen to do well and tackle their work willingly. Although assessment systems provide good quality information about progress that is used in lesson planning, expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough to challenge them fully. Learning time is sometimes lost when lessons do not get off to a swift start or as pupils move between activities. The curriculum provides interesting lessons, and very popular cultural and sporting activities greatly enrich pupils' experience beyond the classroom.

Staff, leaders and managers share a clear vision and strong commitment to school improvement, as shown in accurate self-evaluation and focussed development plans. Effective actions in response to the findings of the previous inspection mean pupils now receive clear guidance to help them improve their work. Strategies to boost pupils' attainment in mathematics, including professional development for staff, consistently applied methods of calculation and extra lessons are proving increasingly effective, especially in the classes for younger pupils where progress is accelerating

and attainment is rising more rapidly. In light of all of these points, there is good capacity for improvement and the school gives good value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment throughout the school by:
 - ensuring that all staff have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve and always challenge them to aim higher
 - enhancing pupils' reading comprehension skills to boost their ability to use and apply their mathematical knowledge when solving problems
 - setting clear and specific whole-school improvement targets, with precise time limits and rigorous checks to ensure they fully impact on attainment.

- Ensure lessons start promptly and learning time is not lost in the transition between activities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Discussions with pupils and observations in all classes show they enjoy lessons and have very positive attitudes to learning. Consequently, they work diligently, cooperate willingly with staff and classmates, for example, with their 'talking partners', and make good progress. Pupils present their work with care.

Lesson observations, the work in pupils' books, school and national data show that all groups of pupils progress well. As they move through the school, pupils build on their good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and develop good oral skills that enable them to discuss their ideas confidently. The recent focus on writing has successfully raised pupils' attainment, particularly in Key Stage 1. Over time, attainment in English has been above the national average by the end of Year 6 where pupils enhance their written work with interesting vocabulary. Attainment in mathematics is weaker, largely due to weaknesses in problem-solving, although school data show attainment is now also rising in this subject.

The caring school ethos promotes pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is above average. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong, and behave well, although a few of them think this could be better. One comment, 'Teachers and staff always help you', demonstrates that pupils trust staff to listen and act if any problems arise, so bullying is not seen as an issue. Pupils have an excellent understanding of health matters and know how to be safe on the roads, near water and when using the internet. They enjoy the varied cultural experiences provided by the curriculum and act very responsibly as prefects or when looking after younger ones. The school council's presentation to the governing body led to changes to the school uniform and new playground benches. A recent practical activity gave pupils insight into basic economics. Good personal skills, cooperative attitudes and secure academic skills give pupils a good basis for the future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Pupils say they enjoy lessons so they behave well and work hard. Although they do not always start promptly enough, most lessons move along at a good pace. They make effective use of teachers' good subject knowledge and varied resources, including information and communication technology (ICT) and practical activities that engage pupils. Skilled teaching assistants make a valuable contribution, especially for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English. Assessment information is used to plan work that builds on pupils' previous learning, but teachers' planning does not always specify activities for pupils' different abilities or learning needs, and sometimes activities lack challenge. Pupils are confident that the 'traffic light' marking system and feedback help them improve their work.

The curriculum is developing a more creative approach whilst fully covering all basic skills. Imaginative themes are beginning to link subjects together meaningfully, for example, finding suitable adjectives to describe the pirate they had created in an art lesson. A well-planned programme for personal development provides good opportunities to consider issues and life choices in a secure environment. Enrichment activities strongly enhance pupils' cultural and social development through a wide range of visitors and visits, plus residential visits for older pupils. After-school clubs are varied and very popular.

Pupils and their parents and carers commented very favourably on the school's strong pastoral care. Pupils feel extremely safe, are eager to learn and benefit from good home-school relationships and links with the church. Any who are potentially vulnerable because of their circumstances are well supported. Strong links with external professional agencies are sensitively directed to benefit these pupils and their families. Good intervention procedures for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language ensure they progress well. Pupils start school happily and move confidently between different

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

stages of their education due to good induction and transition arrangements. The pastoral care is very strong but some elements of safeguarding are only satisfactory.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Ambitious aspirations and vision for improvement, shared by leaders, managers, the governing body and staff have resulted in improvement since the last inspection, and staff morale is high. Accurate self-evaluation ensures areas of weakness are quickly identified and acted upon. Teaching and learning are regularly monitored by senior leaders for performance management and professional development. However, targets and plans for on-going improvement do not always have rigorous time scales for actions and assessing their impact. The supportive governing body provides a good range of skills and community links and are confident to challenge and question school leaders on outcomes and areas for improvement. It ensures the school is a safe, secure environment for pupils, staff, parents and carers and is currently reviewing all safeguarding procedures.

Parents and carers are valued as partners and the school works hard to help them support learning at home. For example, it provides weekly newsletters and the school website shows a lesson about letters and sounds so parents and carers can reinforce messages at home. A wide range of partnerships support pupils' good achievement and bring additional experiences, including activities to develop mathematics teaching. Good arrangements for equal opportunities ensure there is no discrimination. Consequently all groups progress equally well and participate in everything the school offers.

Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements, and all staff are trained in child protection but the documentation is not systematically drawn together. The school is a cohesive, harmonious community and leaders have a good understanding of the local community. Themed weeks, such as Black History week, contribute well to pupils' knowledge of different faiths, cultures and lifestyles in the wider world, and pupils have acted as 'ambassadors' to link St Mary's with schools in America and Africa.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account:	
The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2

The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Very well-considered induction procedures and strong relationships with parents and carers ensure children quickly and happily settle in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children's skills on entry are below those typical for their age, especially their language skills. Boys and girls, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or at an early stage of learning English, all make good progress in their learning through the Nursery and Reception classes. By the time they leave, most are working at the expected levels, although children's skills in some aspects of language remain slightly weaker.

Children behave very well, share equipment and play happily together. They care for each other because they feel well cared for in the secure, welcoming environment. Regular observations of progress are used to plan activities for the next steps in learning and to meet individual needs. Good teaching provides an interesting range of activities for children to explore and investigate, carefully balanced between those led by adults and those they initiate themselves. Children's confidence and independence are developed well, for example, on their first time in the nursery, children were gently encouraged to choose and pour their drink at snack time.

Learning activities are well resourced and space is well organised, although the very wide range of activities on offer can result in children moving too quickly from one activity to another. The three outdoor areas provide activities in all areas of learning; children love being outside and can go on a lion hunt through the long grass and across the 'river', read in the 'cave' or manoeuvre their bikes around the track. Opportunities outside to practise early writing skills and to explore numbers are limited.

Good leadership and management ensure all Early Years Foundation Stage requirements are fully met and welfare arrangements are implemented. The dedicated staff team is strongly committed to ensuring children are happy and progressing well in all areas of their learning and individual personal development.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Most questionnaires returned by parents and carers expressed very positive views about the school. All agreed that children are kept safe and are helped to be healthy. They were particularly positive about their child's enjoyment of school, school leaders and teaching, and that the school helps them support learning at home. A few felt that unacceptable behaviour is not dealt with effectively. Inspectors discussed this with school leaders and found there is an established behaviour code that pupils know, understood and say is fair.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Radcliffe to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 125 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 460 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	96	77	25	20	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	97	78	27	22	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	77	62	43	35	1	1	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	70	56	43	35	6	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	82	66	36	29	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	78	63	41	33	2	2	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	77	62	44	35	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	83	67	34	27	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	79	64	37	30	4	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	66	53	45	36	7	6	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	65	52	44	35	4	3	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	93	75	26	21	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	94	76	25	20	2	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



28 September 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Radcliffe,
M26 4DG**

The inspection team asked me to tell you that your polite, friendly welcome made our visit to your school very enjoyable. We visited lessons, attended assembly and saw you working and playing outside in the sunshine. Thank you all! And special thanks to those of you who met us at lunchtime on Monday. This is what we found.

St Mary's is a good school with good leaders, managers and teachers. You told us you really enjoy school and feel very safe there. This pleases your parents and carers who are very happy with the school. The Nursery and Reception classes give you a good start. You work hard, behave well and are keen to tackle everything so you all make good progress. By the time you leave, you reach average standards for your age. The staff care for you well and make sure your lessons are interesting. I know you enjoy the clubs and sports, going on visits and meeting visitors, learning the guitar and learning to speak French.

A few things could be even better so we have asked the leaders to:

- make sure staff always challenge you to aim higher in your work, especially in mathematics
- help you make better use of your mathematics knowledge to tackle problems
- make sure that no learning time is wasted
- check that their plans and targets for the school have been swiftly carried out.

So look out for extra challenges coming your way! We hope you will continue to work hard, help the staff and enjoy all you do whilst at St Mary's School.

Yours sincerely,

Kathleen McArthur
Lead inspector

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