

# St Charles' RC School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119650
<b>Local authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	379862
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 January 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Stephen Rowland

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	187
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Fr Martin Dowd
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Vivien Baker
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 June 2009
<b>School address</b>	Knowles Street Rishton Blackburn BB1 4HT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01254 886110
<b>Fax number</b>	01254 882784
<b>Email address</b>	bursar@st-charles.lancs.sch.uk

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## Introduction

Inspection team

Stephen Rowland  
David Byrne

Additional inspector  
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed eight teachers teaching 11 lessons, of which one was a joint observation with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors made short visits to phonics sessions and listened to children read. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and school staff. Inspectors took account the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, records of pupils' progress and attainment and minutes of meetings of the governing body. During the inspection, 111 parental and carers' questionnaires were analysed together with others completed by pupils and staff.

## Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is just below the national average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is very small and very few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is close to average but the percentage who receive external support including those with a statement of special educational needs is slightly above average. The school is above current government floor targets, which set minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

Since the time of the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed and a deputy headteacher who retired has not been replaced. The school has Healthy Schools status and the Eco Schools Bronze Award.

There is a privately run out-of-school club on site. This is subject to separate inspection arrangements.

**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

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key Findings

- This is a good school. Under the leadership of the new headteacher, the school is improving rapidly. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their high level of attendance. They are happy and have a positive attitude to learning. Behaviour is good and pupils have a highly developed sense of right and wrong and feel safe. They relate well to each other and to adults and have a good awareness of their responsibilities towards others.
- Achievement for the majority of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is good. The rate of pupils' progress has accelerated since the last inspection.
- Teaching is lively and engaging. Lessons are carefully planned to ensure that pupils are challenged and make good progress. Assessment is used skilfully to see where support is needed to ensure that pupils do not fall behind. Marking does not always ensure that pupils develop an understanding of their achievements and how they can improve. The curriculum offers pupils a wide variety of engaging activities. Music is a particular strength.
- Attainment is rising rapidly throughout the school. Attainment in mathematics and in reading is now above average. Progress in writing has been accelerating but at a slower rate. This is because pupils do not have a sufficiently wide range of writing tasks and there are not enough opportunities to develop writing skills in a variety of different subjects.
- The recently appointed headteacher has a very clear sense of direction and purpose for the school. Her dynamism and commitment have established a sense of shared ambition and drive. Other key staff and members of the governing body are increasingly involved in evaluating the school's progress and in planning for improvement. The school engages well with a large majority of parents and carers, although information about progress and learning is not shared systematically in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase progress in writing by:
  - ensuring there are frequent opportunities for extended writing tasks in a variety of school subjects
  - ensuring that pupils are given the opportunity to write for a broad and varied range of purposes.
- Adopt marking strategies that ensure that pupils develop a knowledge and understanding of their achievements and how they can improve.
- Further develop communications with parents and carers of the Early Years Foundation Stage children so that information about children's learning can be shared systematically.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

A very large majority of parents and carers are entirely happy with the progress of their children. This is fully justified by inspection findings. In all lessons progress is good or better. Pupils respond well to the wide range of engaging tasks offered to them. They are keen to learn and enjoy learning. In a particularly successful literacy lesson, for example, pupils worked together to explore the differences between two poems and to identify features of the language used. They were able to do this with enthusiasm and displayed a keen ability to debate ideas and so to extend their learning. The school's focus on guided reading has helped to strengthen pupils' ability to explain their ideas clearly and to write with more focus. Well-structured phonics sessions have ensured that pupils make good progress in reading and spelling. By the end of Year 2 standards in reading are broadly average and by the end of Year 6 most pupils read well for their age.

Many children enter the school with language skills and some aspects of mathematical skills which are below those typical for their age. They make good progress throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage and rapidly make up lost ground. This good progress continues throughout the school with many pupils making progress which exceeds the national average. The most recent test results show attainment at the end of Year 6 to be above average in mathematics and broadly average in English. The school's robust tracking data show that the level of pupils' attainment and the rate of their progress are accelerating rapidly with the strongest gains being in mathematics and reading. Where pupils are identified as being not on track to achieve their potential, effective interventions are put in place.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are given appropriate and sensitive support so that they also make good progress. There are no significant gaps between the performances of different groups of pupils, although where gaps have been identified in the past, action has been taken to close them. The attainment of more-able pupils has improved strongly in recent years. The school's detailed progress tracking data supported by evidence

from work scrutiny and lesson observations shows that a large majority of pupils are currently in line to achieve or exceed the ambitious targets set for them.

## Quality of teaching

A large majority of parents and carers are happy with the quality of teaching their children receive. Inspection findings endorse their views. Teaching is good with some outstanding features. As a result, pupils develop good relationships and social skills. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan interesting lessons which engage pupils. The pace of learning is brisk and pupils of all abilities are challenged by searching questions. In a very effective mathematics lesson, for example, Year 1 pupils were totally engrossed in counting, partitioning and blocking numbers. They found learning fun and mastered skills rapidly. They also worked together as a class and in groups to achieve the lesson objectives. Teaching assistants contribute strongly to learning and support pupils in a sympathetic and focused way. Staff have a very good knowledge of their pupils so that work is closely matched to their interests and abilities. The teaching of writing has improved rapidly; however, opportunities for extended writing in a number of subjects and for a variety of purposes are limited.

Marking is often supportive and helpful. The school is developing a consistent system for telling pupils what they have achieved and to give them ideas as how to improve their work. However, at times this is not sufficiently clear so that its impact is limited. Pupils are often asked to talk together to compare their ideas and to learn from each other. They are increasingly able to assess their own progress and that of their peers to deepen their understanding and confidence.

Teaching contributes strongly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and this ensures they have a clear understanding of right and wrong. The many opportunities pupils have to work with their peers helps them to develop social skills. They acquire a good knowledge and awareness of different cultures and religions in a range of subjects. The school's curriculum ensures that teaching is well organised and that skills are developed in a systematic way.

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

A very large majority of parents say that behaviour is good. Observations in lessons around the school confirm that this is so. Pupils generally act with consideration and courtesy and this means that it is unusual for lessons to be disrupted. Good behaviour contributes to good progress. Pupils enjoy their time in school and this helps to secure high attendance and a positive attitude to learning.

A very small minority of parents and carers did not agree that the school dealt effectively with any instances of bullying. Inspectors explored this matter. During the inspection no cases of bullying were observed. Pupils said that bullying was rare and was dealt with promptly and effectively. Staff agreed that bullying is rare and is taken as a very high priority so that matters are quickly resolved.

Pupils say they feel safe in school. Virtually all parents and carers agree that the school is safe. Pupils have a good understanding of any unsafe situations and how to avoid them. Pupils are confident that they can talk to staff if they have any concerns or worries and that

they will be listened to and action taken to help them. High attendance and good punctuality demonstrate how much pupils enjoy school.

## **Leadership and management**

Since the last inspection, the new headteacher has successfully ensured that the school has continued to improve. Her dynamism and energy have galvanised the staff so that they work as a coherent team all aiming for the best possible standard of education for pupils. In this they are supported by an experienced and committed governing body that knows the school and its community well and provides support when required. The headteacher has introduced a number of key initiatives which have helped to raise standards. The focus on reading skills in particular has had a positive impact on pupils' learning and confidence. A significant number of parents and carers commented favourably on the care that staff take to ensure that pupils can achieve well. One typical comment was: 'The staff are always very professional and ensure that action is taken when needed.' Responsibility is delegated increasingly and resources are focused on continually improving staff knowledge and expertise. Middle leaders are now fully involved in evaluating the quality of teaching and in ensuring that the best practice is shared. Self-evaluation is honest and accurate and increasingly involves all levels of leadership including governors. Actions to secure improvement are thoroughly planned and progress to reach agreed targets is carefully tracked. The school's record of success in recent years suggests that there is a good capacity for sustained improvement.

Safeguarding arrangements are comprehensive and secure. The school ensures the safety and well-being of pupils. The school's engagement with parents and carers is generally good, although a small minority felt that communications could be improved. Inspectors looked into this and found that generally the school communicates well with parents and carers but does not always provide timely information about the curriculum. They are fully aware of this. Although the school engages well with parents and carers, the way the school shares information about children's achievements in the Early Years Foundation Stage is not systematically developed.

Staff and the governing body track pupils' progress carefully and take swift action to eliminate any gaps in performance between different groups. As a result, outcomes are positive and unevenness between groups is slight. There is no place for discrimination at St. Charles and all pupils are treated with equal respect and dignity.

The curriculum is good. It is well planned and meets the needs of all groups of pupils. Recent investment in laptops is having a positive impact on pupils' information and communication technology skills. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is partly as a result of the many enrichment activities which the school organises such as the visit to the Roman Fort and museum at Ribchester. The school's strong ethos contributes to the development of spiritual awareness. Cultural development is promoted partly through the partnership the school has with a school in Blackburn which has a different ethnic and religious profile.

## 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

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## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



18 January 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Charles' RC School, Blackburn BB1 4HT**

Thank you so much for making us so welcome during our recent visit to St Charles School. We were particularly grateful to those of you who agreed to meet us during your lunch break. Thank you also to those of you who completed the questionnaire. All your comments were very helpful.

Yours is a good school. It has many good features.

- You make good progress, attain good standards in mathematics and your standards in reading and writing are improving rapidly.
- You are safe in school and the staff look after you well.
- Your behaviour is good and you are keen to learn.
- You enjoy school as shown by your high attendance.
- You have many opportunities to enjoy music and physical education.

We have asked the school to do these things to make it better:

- make sure you can develop your writing skills in all subjects
- ensure that the marking always helps you to understand how to improve
- make sure that parents and carers are included more in their children's learning in the Reception class.

You are rightly proud of your school. Please help it by always trying your very best.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Rowland  
Lead inspector

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