

St William's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106497
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	377411
Inspection dates	14–15 February 2012
Lead inspector	Melvyn Hemmings

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	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Foster
Headteacher	Emily Ellis
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Melvyn Hemmings
Sheila Loughlin

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed fourteen lessons or parts of lessons taught by eight teachers and six teaching assistants. They held discussions with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff, groups of pupils and a local authority representative. They observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, records of meetings of the governing body, assessment information and curriculum planning. Work in pupils' books and displays around the school were examined. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. Questionnaires from staff, pupils and from 41 parents and carers were scrutinised.

Information about the school

St William's is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs is below average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The school has gained a variety of awards, including the Activemark, and it also has Healthy School Status. The school meets the current government floor standards. The headteacher was appointed in September 2011.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- St William's is a satisfactory school. Its main strengths are the focused leadership of the headteacher that has promoted rapid improvement in attainment in reading, behaviour and attendance, high staff morale and the examples of outstanding practice observed in teaching. The main weaknesses that prevent it being a good school are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching; achievement in writing; a lack of rigour in monitoring and evaluating teaching; and aspects of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Pupils achieve satisfactorily and attain broadly average standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Writing is a weaker aspect of pupils' performance in English, with their sentence structure lacking accuracy and their handwriting not being well developed. Pupils have secure mathematical calculation and problem-solving skills.
- Teaching ensures that most pupils make satisfactory progress. There are examples of outstanding practice that enable pupils to make rapid and sustained progress. Not all teachers consistently set appropriately challenging work for different groups of pupils.
- Although attendance has been low over time, it is improving quickly and is now approaching the national average. Parents and carers, staff and pupils say there has been significant improvement in behaviour since the start of the school year. Most pupils behave well and this contributes to a friendly and orderly school environment. Pupils say they feel safe in school.
- Leaders, the governing body and staff share the headteacher's ambitious vision for taking the school forward. The leadership of teaching and management of performance have led to improvement, particularly in promoting pupils' reading skills. However, leaders do not always check rigorously that teachers have responded to identified areas for development. The curriculum does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to write at length in subjects other than English.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement, particularly in writing by:
 - ensuring all teachers consistently provide pupils of different ability with sufficiently challenging activities
 - improving pupils' handwriting skills and their ability to construct sentences accurately
 - providing sufficient opportunities for pupils to write at length across the curriculum.

- Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by ensuring teachers respond successfully to their identified areas for development.

- Improve the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - increasing structured opportunities for children to make choices for themselves, particularly in the nursery
 - strengthening the links between indoor and outdoor learning.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils achieve satisfactorily from their skill levels on entering school, which are generally below those which are typical. Inconsistencies in the progress of pupils between classes prevent achievement from being good. Throughout the school, pupils have positive attitudes, showing enjoyment and enthusiasm in their activities. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make satisfactory progress across all areas of learning. They cooperate well in pairs and small groups, taking turns and sharing fairly. Children make better progress in Reception than in Nursery because ongoing assessments are used more effectively in Reception to match activities to individual needs. This was observed when Reception children were being taught to link letters and sounds. They made good progress in identifying and saying words that contained the 'igh' sound, such as 'light', 'night' and 'fight'.

Progress through the rest of the school is satisfactory overall. As a result, pupils attain standards that are broadly average in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Attainment in reading at the end of Key Stage 1 has been below average over time. Improvement in the teaching of reading has resulted in rapid improvement over the last few months. Consequently, most pupils currently in Year 2 are working at expected levels and increasing numbers are exceeding them. By the time they leave school, attainment in reading is broadly average. Pupils' skills are improving quickly throughout Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils enjoy the greater range of books provided for them, reading confidently and with expression. Pupils' attainment in writing, though broadly average, is not as strong. They write imaginatively in a variety of styles, including narrative and poetry, but their sentences lack accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation. Their handwriting does not have precision and is untidy. Pupils have secure mathematical calculation skills, including quick mental recall, and can use them to solve a variety of real-life number problems.

In their questionnaires, almost all parents and carers agreed that their children were making good progress at the school. Inspection evidence shows that increasing numbers of pupils are making good progress although it is satisfactory overall. There is no significant difference between the achievement or the quality of learning of different groups. This includes pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are not. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are given extra support to make sure they make the same progress as other pupils.

Quality of teaching

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff work well together as a team to provide interesting activities that maintain children's interest. At times, teaching does not provide sufficient opportunities for children to take part in structured activities that enable them to make choices for themselves. This is particularly the case in Nursery. Staff make better use of the outdoor area than at the last inspection. There is still more to do, as learning outdoors does not always build sufficiently on that which has taken place indoors. In Key Stages 1 and 2, teachers have secure subject knowledge that enables them to ask relevant questions to find out what pupils know and to take their learning forward. They usually plan activities that build upon prior knowledge and understanding so that pupils can use what they already know to support their current learning. Not all teachers use assessment information consistently to set work that meets the needs of different groups. This slows the progress that pupils make at times in some classes. Teaching assistants are deployed appropriately to support all pupils, especially disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.

Outstanding teaching was characterised by imaginative teaching strategies that generated high levels of enthusiasm and independence, ensuring that pupils made rapid progress. This was exemplified in a literacy lesson for pupils in Year 1, in which they were developing their skills in writing the beginning to a story, using adjectives to describe the settings. Teaching contributes positively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers manage classrooms well and have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. The opportunities for pupils to be involved in paired and small group activities effectively promote their social development. The curriculum is planned appropriately to develop pupils' numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics. There are insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to improve their literacy skills by writing at length across the curriculum. Almost all parents and carers feel that their children are taught well at school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils, parents, carers and staff overwhelmingly say that behaviour has improved significantly in recent months. Major disruption to learning has been eliminated, though low-level disruption occurs occasionally. Observations in lessons and around school show the school to be a friendly place in which to learn. This makes a positive contribution to the progress that pupils make. A few parents and carers did not agree that the school deals with any cases of bullying effectively. These views were explored by inspectors. During the inspection no instances of bullying were observed. Pupils have a clear understanding of the different kinds of bullying and say that any such behaviour is rare. If it happens, they say staff deal with it promptly.

Pupils are polite and thoughtful in their actions towards others. They enjoy coming to school, with one comment being typical: 'We like school because teachers make our lessons

interesting and fun.' They have positive attitudes to learning and want to do well. Pupils readily take on responsibilities such as being a school councillor or looking after younger pupils at lunchtime. These opportunities make an effective contribution to their social development. They know how to stay safe; having a good understanding of what might be an unsafe situation. The curriculum contributes positively to their understanding of how to stay safe, particularly in terms of using the internet responsibly. Pupils' rapidly improving attendance is an important factor in their accelerating progress.

Leadership and management

The leadership team was restructured at the start of the school year and has developed its skills well because of the guidance and training provided by the headteacher. Leaders are now confident in taking on responsibility and providing effective professional development for all staff. As a result, though improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall, it has accelerated in recent months. Leaders at all levels have a shared commitment to driving the school forward. They regularly observe lessons and provide areas for development for teachers. Subsequent observations do not always rigorously ensure that teachers have responded to these areas. The governing body is supportive of the school and is developing its expertise in holding it to account for its performance. Self-evaluation is accurate and gives a clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The capacity to improve is satisfactory and improving. This is demonstrated by sustained improvement in attendance, behaviour, and achievement in reading, particularly in Key Stage 1, since the start of the school year.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements and give no cause for concern. The promotion of equal opportunity and tackling of discrimination are satisfactory, with the school regularly checking the performance of different groups. This enabled leaders to identify that boys were not achieving as well as girls. Strategies were put into place to address this and there is now no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Links with others, including the local cluster of primary schools and the high school, contribute positively to pupils' achievement and progress, particularly in sport, drama and music.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and is satisfactory. It is enriched by a variety of extra-curricular activities, including art, cookery and sports clubs, which are well attended. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 talked enthusiastically about their recent residential stay at an outdoor centre, saying, 'It really helped us to work together as a team'. Opportunities to work with a variety of visitors effectively extend pupils' skills and widen their horizons. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. This is shown in pupils' improved behaviour and their appropriate understanding of the beliefs and traditions of cultures different to their own. Engagement with parents and carers has improved and ensures they are better involved in their children's learning and the work of the school. One comment was typical, 'I feel the school and communication have improved immensely and I feel well informed about what is going on in school'.

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).

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.

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.



16 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St William's Catholic Primary School, Wigan, WN2 2DG

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave the team when we inspected your school. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing the many interesting things you do.

The inspectors judge that yours is a satisfactory school and that:

- you attain average standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6
- your reading skills are improving quickly
- the curriculum provides interesting activities, including a residential stay at an outdoor centre for pupils in Years 5 and 6
- you feel safe in school, as indicated in your questionnaires
- behaviour has improved significantly since the start of the school year
- you enjoy school, as is shown by your rapidly improving attendance.

What we have asked your school to do now is to:

- help you to improve your handwriting and your ability to write accurately structured sentences
- make sure all teachers give you work that always makes you think hard
- ensure teachers respond successfully to areas identified for them to improve
- increase opportunities for children in Nursery and Reception to make choices for themselves and improve links between indoor and outdoor learning.

All of you are a credit to your school and can help it improve further by continuing to try your best in all your activities.

Yours sincerely

Melvyn Hemmings
Lead inspector

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